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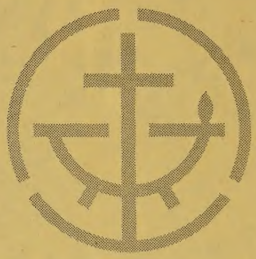
METHODISM IN 1879

IMPRESSIONS OF THE WESLEYAN CHURCH AND ITS MINISTERS.



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IMPRESSIONS OF

The Wesleyan Church and its Ministers.

A REVIEW

SUGGESTED BY THE THANKSGIVING FUND.

"The tower of strength which stood
Four square to all the winds that blew."—*Tennyson.*

London:

HAUGHTON & Co., 10, PATERNOSTER ROW.

1879.

METHODIST
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY

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" Read this work through ; then compare the state of your mind with the state in which your mind was when you first opened the book. If you have not got good, condemn it as worthless, but if your conscience dictates the opposite answer declare this."—*Samuel Taylor Coleridge.*

METHODISM IN 1879.

CHAPTER I.

A RETROSPECT.

AT a time when the Wesleyan Methodist Body has given another clear evidence of large heartedness, and when it is understood that the action of the ministers themselves has been liberal in every sense it may not be inappropriate or unprofitable to pass in review the position and prospects of the Wesleyan Church, endeavouring as far as we can to examine its constituent elements and collateral bearings in relation to the tumultuous age in which we live. And let it be understood at the outset that we do not set about this work desiring to reproduce the spirit of a former time. The partially fatal breath of certain Centenary movements has passed away, probably never to return. Now and again we hear of a book* that was almost, if not altogether, wholly injurious ; but it is quietly relegated to hidden corners, and is now only occasionally brought out because of its notoriety and some ability which it unmistakably disclosed,

* *Wesleyan Takings.*

but not because of any spiritual glow it is likely to give. It is a memory now, but without the loftier elevation that gives the charm of vital and continuous life.

The Rev. Thomas Jackson in his Autobiography—one of the most interesting books of our time—has demonstrated, with great clearness, the fallacious character of an agitation, very seldom mentioned now. No impartial reader of his account of the working and aim of the movement can fail to gather that Thomas Jackson and his coadjutors met the opposing forces not only with the proper official attitude but with a commendable spirit. We know of no better vindication than Mr. Jackson's of the action of the Methodist body against the men who were bent, by the adoption of the most questionable means, of carrying revolutionary and destructive forces into the midst of a great Christian system, endeavouring by every possible expedient to reduce it to confusion and despair. It does not seem necessary for us, therefore, to interpose any very elaborate defence of those who clung courageously to their duties, and held the battlements with a firm hand. Yet the Thanksgiving Fund, with its twofold object—first to wipe away debt, and secondly to commemorate the introduction of laymen into the Wesleyan Conference—appears to suggest some thoughts of satisfaction and pleasure. The success of the fund has been so marked, there are so many incidents of a notable character connected with it, that we are irresistibly led to reflect upon the way Divine Providence has led the Methodists from 1850 to 1879, a period of nearly thirty years. We are persuaded that such reflection will have its

uses. Contrast for a moment the former with the latter time—the old with the new.

In a postscript to the *Wesleyan Takings* published in 1851 we find the following passage :—"Since we commenced our artistic labours in the first volume of these *Takings* the world has undergone many changes for good or for evil ;—changes slow and without observation in their progress, or rapid and instantaneous in their development. In the political world the foundations of society have been shaken to their very centre ; a mighty dynasty has been overturned, and is now with its author and head numbered among the things that were. Nor has the religious world escaped commotion and change. Every branch of the Christian Church has felt more or less the influence of agitation, the wing of the tempest has swept over them all. But the fury of the storm seems to have burst upon the Wesleyan portion of that Church. Why this should have been the case is a question upon which we shall not now speculate. We hold the opinion, however, that if the wisdom which characterised the pure and patriarchal administration of John Wesley had continued to influence the councils and guide the movements of those who since his day have stood at the helm of government, the good old Wesleyan Ship—to employ a somewhat favourite metaphor—instead of being at the present moment *all but a wreck*, would now have occupied the same position among the religious sects in our country which England does among the nations of Europe—she would have been an ark of security and strength where the weary and tempest-tossed of other denominations might have sought shelter and repose. But

alas! alas! the dynasty of John Wesley has passed away and with it the pure and apostolic spirit by which it was directed."

The italics are ours. "The dynasty of John Wesley has passed away." How does that statement read in the light of recent events? At a time when the country is suffering from almost unparalleled financial stagnation, and nearly every large town has its Relief Subscriptions for the poor and starving, the Wesleyan Connexion with a noble faith and endeavour sets itself to raise £200,000. This is done by the Church that was according to the writer quoted "all but a wreck" in 1851. Will any one venture to say that there is no apostolic spirit here?

Moreover we may ask what is the position of the Methodist body in 1879 as regards the other churches. Does it not occupy a similar position to that which England does among the nations of the earth? The well known statement of the great founder of Methodism "the friends of all, the enemies of none," was never truer than it is to day. The Wesleyan denomination is everywhere held in respect, in many quarters with the highest respect. And the esteem grows day after day, year after year. Is there any band of Christians in this country bearing hostility to that Body? Nay, has there not been seen recently in diverse forms a disposition on the part of other Christian organizations to co-operate with the Wesleyans in many good works? An inclination thus shewn towards mutual working in the sphere of the propagation of religious principles involves esteem. The Congregationalists are friendly; so are the Baptists; and as regards the Church of England it is enough to

note that only lately Dr. Rigg was induced to write a book pointing out how the Wesleyans could not return to the English Church as suggested in several quarters. It is well known that many influential authorities in the Establishment would willingly make overtures for union if any encouragement were given to do so. It is, therefore, clear that the Wesleyan connexion is not losing, but rather gaining increased influence and power.

In numerous other ways progress is notable. Is there any great philanthropic movement in this country in which the Wesleyans are not called to take a part? Are not their ministers frequently found on platforms where social and benevolent movements are advocated? Are they less liberal than other bodies in donations to charitable institutions? Is the spirit of enlightened beneficence narrower with them than with their neighbours? And if we pass from English soil and look elsewhere does the position of the societies suggest less respect and power? In Scotland, we have been told, the aggressive character of Methodism has been admired by men holding the highest positions in Presbyterian Churches. More than that, the missionary spirit in the North was stimulated by the example of energy and liberality disclosed on this side the border. Men like Dr. Guthrie, Dr. William Anderson, Dr. Buchanan, and Professor Burns were unwearied in their examination and even study of the system out of which such great spiritual results have flowed. The evangelical portion of the Scotch Clergy, as a body, have seen in Methodism a force worthy of the highest veneration. In more recent days, we are informed that an exchange

of pulpits in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Dundee is not the exception but the rule. The pulpit of the venerable Cathedral of Glasgow was occupied a few years ago by a Wesleyan Minister. We might go on and extend our observations by looking to the vast and growing influences of the societies in the great colonial possessions of the Crown. But enough has been said to demonstrate how fallacious as well as ungenerous was the declaration made that "the dynasty of John Wesley had passed away and with it the pure and apostolic spirit by which it was directed."

It would be an easy matter in these days to lay hold of a hundred or two hundred Wesleyan ministers and describe their physical appearance and the qualities of their minds, mingling with our portraiture such quotations from Scripture as would bring temporary ridicule and make the short-sighted laugh. It is not a difficult work to fasten phrases from the Bible upon certain characters to provoke a little amusement, which can at best be but passing show. We hold that to be able to engage in such work does not imply intellectual genius of a very high order. On the other hand it may be positively asserted that it demonstrates the absence of qualities that form the basis of the highest kind of character. Such writing as we have in view may be good enough for those so called society journals where religion is openly disregarded and professedly sneered at. But it cannot serve any high moral purpose within the sphere of religious life, and far less within the sphere of the Methodist ministry, because of the direct relations that exist between the preachers and the people. To throw ridicule upon a

minister of the gospel is to weaken his influence over his hearers. To do this by sacrificing our devout reverence for the most Holy Scriptures is a double degradation, for it simultaneously lowers the character of man and of God. Can anything, therefore, be more demoralising in the whole range of Christian relationship?

Our readers will not require anything further to induce them to accept us with confidence. We do not want to be suspected in the least degree, and should anything appear in these pages calculated to give offence, or to injure the cause of truth, we shall gladly obliterate the work as far as we possibly can. Our object is not to destroy, but to create, not to pull down, but to build up, not to make divisions, but to cement in concord and mutual sympathy. We hold that charity should accompany criticism, and if the former be the handmaid of the latter criticism will, to use the words of Wesley, "attain not a poor perishable wreath but a crown that fadeth not away."

We may as well state before proceeding further that here no attempt will be made to draw elaborate pictures of the dresses or clothing of ministers. Nor will it be necessary to descend to the very contemptible expedient of touching upon defects in their bodily appearance. It will not, moreover, be any part of our aim to inquire into the fitness of this or that man for a certain office. No church has been or ever will be able to distribute its rewards of place and office to please every one. Outside the pale of the Church men have to face good luck and circumstance. The daily round of

life is full of contingencies that tell upon our fortune. We cannot all dispense power—that is to say, the power coveted by worldly ambition. But there is no sphere in the wide range of existence where our nature may not be chastened, elevated, and purified. Nor is there a single spot where our gifts, diverse as they may be, may not find legitimate and in most cases ample exercise. The sphere of the Christian ministry is above all others the last place where men ought to cavil because of their neighbour's position. A true attitude of mind will adapt itself, difficult as the task may be, to the surrounding circumstances. We know that there are preachers in the towns and in the villages too that would discharge efficiently the duties of a metropolitan pulpit, but it would be unwise, if it were possible, to pull down the whole ecclesiastical machinery of Methodism on this account. There is complexity in this matter as in most things—possibly mystery too. But he will prove himself the noblest man who envies not his brother, but seeks out vigilantly in his own limited range the opportunities of creating moral excellence. For it is a law of our nature that in going out of ourselves, and dispensing to others out of our intellectual stores and moral garnering, we find ourselves speedily after with a richer heritage. Let those who complain cast their eyes towards other departments of labour and of thought. The silly, trashy novel, without either backbone or brain, wins success in literature, while works that bear the image of steady concentration of thought, and the contemplation of evening hours, scarcely bring a morsel of bread to feed the hungry author. It was not in the time of

Johnson and of Savage only that pale-faced writers walked Fleet Street or the Strand under trying circumstances. In our own day there are plenty of examples to demonstrate that it is not the best literary men that win the highest success—success being understood as money or position in society.

Let us be guarded here. Our illustration is not meant to convey the idea that in the Methodist Connexion the men who hold office are less fit or less worthy than many who do not hold office. We merely wish to point out that in the very nature of things it is impossible to gain equality, at least the kind of equality sought after by those who would pull to pieces a splendid system in order to attain their object. Certain writers have railed often against the Methodist organization with all the wild clamour of a Thersites. We have said enough to show that it is no part of our object to follow in the track of such men, now happily very few. It is not probable that they will be able to sow discord again, at least with the same destructive results as on a previous occasion, of which we have not much more to say.

Some might reply that it is imprudent at this late time to refer to a book now practically dead, and to a controversy long closed. We can only plead in justification that it arises from an involuntary pleasure which we experience when we think of the changes that have occurred since the mischievous influence was scattered over the Connexion. How many now rejoice in taking part in what was denominated the Reform Movement? We are glad to find to-day that the Wesleyan body was never stronger, never healthier, never more vigorous. To entertain these thoughts is a rapture, and

the reference to the mournful past will we are sure be pardoned by our readers, when we tell them that it is only used by way of pleasing contrast.

We desire not to speak evil of the dead, or to detract from any legitimate reputation the author of the book in question may have gained. Of the literary character of the work we can speak with the utmost freedom. It reveals intellectual excellence, and considerable stores of information. The allusions to classical writers are occasionally pedantic, but they are generally apposite to the author's purpose, and they give a kind of charm which will be readily appreciated by those of cultivated tastes, or those familiar with the ancient models. It moreover shews the author to have been a man possessed of the critical faculty in a high degree. Apart from the purpose of the *Wesleyan Takings* the central fault of the book, regarded as a piece of literary workmanship, is its tendency to exaggeration. Language is used in many of the portraits that would require some reservation if applied to Shakespeare, Bacon, or Milton. All the resources of metaphor, hyperbole, simile, allegory, the author can command, are lavished upon the men after his own heart. But those not enjoying his smile or confidence are treated either to ridicule or abuse, and in many cases the writer has lowered himself by coming down from his lofty seat in order to gather literary mud with which he can better bespatter those set down in his catalogue for his self imposed task of reproof and correction. From that point of view, therefore, the work was essentially faulty. The same abilities, the same energy expended on some other and nobler work might have brought the author an enduring reputation, and saved

him from a memory that must necessarily be associated in many minds with some regret.

But when we revert to the aim of the book we freely confess that we entirely agree with the able reply sent forth in the pages of the *Wesleyan Magazine* in the year 1840. "If we may judge from the manner in which this volume is written, the design of the author was twofold: amusement and the gratification of his own prejudices. To please a certain class of readers, who would rather laugh than either think or pray, one hundred Methodist preachers have been selected answering to the Centenary with its holy associations which has just closed; and their peculiarities of person, manner, voice, dress, habit, their capacities and supposed acquirements, are made subjects of remark, commendation, or censure, according to the writer's own predilection and caprice. Some of the men are highly praised and others equally estimable are treated with rudeness, sarcastic levity, and even contempt. In proportion as the book circulates, and its statements are regarded, these ministers must be despised and their public labours become powerless or ineffectual. The writer of this volume comes in the garb of a friend; but his lucubrations are of a far more mischievous tendency than all the ribaldry of Lavington and Nightingale, or the studied misrepresentations of such writers as Dr. Bennett. The spirit which he has infused into his book is as directly opposed to that which pervades Mr. Wesley's *Earnest Appeal*, as profane levity is opposed to Christian seriousness and cold malignity to the tender charity, meekness, and gentleness of Christ.*

* *Methodist Magazine*, 1840; p. 1039.

Some light on the progress of Methodism may be gathered from the address of the Conference of 1878. Compare this document with that published in 1851, and it will be seen whether the ship is sinking or the dynasty of John Wesley swept away. A decrease in members is no doubt announced, but take a survey over the years between 1849 and 1879, the one period marked by agitation and discord, the other by the noble Thanksgiving Fund, and learn whether the former energy has been crushed, and the former zeal cast to the winds. In the very able address presented to the Conference last year we gather that chapels and schools, congregations and scholars, have largely increased in numbers, though a decrease in actual membership is recorded.* The chapel affairs are most encouraging, a larger sum having being reported as expended in new erections than in any previous year of Methodist history. Foreign missions—surely a good index to general material and spiritual prosperity of the body—continue in "unabated vigour." These missions were attacked during the period of agitation, but the spirit infused into such magnificent enterprise was too strong to be beaten down by cavilling. The opposition may be said to have been effectually crushed. Jackson in his *Life and Times* relates how this was done, and we read the narrative in these days with considerable satisfaction. He says "While the agitators were exerting themselves to injure the missions, using both the platform and the press for the purpose of inducing the collectors to discontinue their services and the subscribers to withhold their contributions, the

* Since this Chapter was written a decrease is announced for the current year. This matter is noticed in Chap. VIII.

friends of this grand scheme of Christian benevolence were roused to efforts more strenuous than ever to counteract the anti-Christian design." In this noble enterprise the Methodists of Leeds led the way. The anniversary of the Auxiliary Missionary Society for the Leeds district is held in the autumn, and in the year 1849 it acquired special interest, the standard of public opposition to the missions having been just erected. All eyes were, therefore, turned towards that town, and every one was anxious to know how the people there would act in this new and painful emergency. "When the time for the meeting came," says Thomas Jackson, "Brunswick Chapel was thoroughly filled, friends and foes being anxious to see and hear. Nothing would satisfy the friends but that I as representing the Conference should occupy the chair; and well did they supply me with bank notes, that the chair should not be dishonoured when the collection was made. Mr. Arthur was present, and before the business of the meeting began he suggested to me that in his speech he was quite prepared to take the bull by the horns, meaning to undertake an open and fearless defence of the missions against the hostile attacks which had been made upon them. I told him that I would impose upon him no restraint; and he defended both them and the conduct of the managing committee with admirable ability and effect. Other speakers followed in the same tone and spirit; the meeting caught the right feelings; and the noble sum of more than eight hundred pounds was immediately collected, followed by other large and handsome collections in the course of the same week."

We were not privileged to hear Mr. Arthur on that occasion, but we have been frequently informed that his effort was a splendid one. No man could be better fitted for such a task. His clear vision, his scorn at any scheme planned to thwart a God-like work, and his intense loyalty to the institutions of his own Church, together with his accurate understanding, marked him out as a man peculiarly adapted for "taking the bull by the horns." His speech was echoed far beyond Leeds, as many acquainted with the history of the period will remember. "The example set by Leeds gave new heart to the Connexion generally, so that the missionary meetings through the year assumed a tone of confidence and were marked by liberality."

Has the old spirit departed? Is there less enthusiasm in Brunswick Chapel or Exeter Hall in later days? Some of the meetings have been marked by conspicuous enthusiasm. Missionary preachers from foreign lands are still listened to with an interest wholly unselfish, and the leading men in the home ministry still have the warmest sympathy in all their efforts. We shall have occasion to speak further on in respect to the missionary aspects of our work. So we merely reiterate here that the annual address of the Conference declares that the foreign work is going on in "unabated vigour," and thus another argument is afforded us that the dynasty of John Wesley is not destroyed.

On the very page which records the continued strength of the missionary enterprise we have an additional argument to prove that the ship is very far from being wrecked. The announcement is made that the long sought union between the Primitive

Wesleyan Methodists in Ireland and the parent body is consummated, and a hope is expressed that it may presage the closer fellowship of all the Methodist Churches in this country. There is a good deal in these words, and when we consider all things it appears to us that the prophecies of 1851 have been completely falsified.

We may here close these general remarks by an excerpt, simple, yet full of animation, from the latter pages of Jackson's *Recollections*. He says "It has been my happiness for more than sixty years to witness the steady progress of the form of Christianity with which I have been connected, and many new arrangements introduced into its economy. Among these I would particularly mention the organization of the Missionary Society and the consequent formation of successful missions in Ceylon, Continental India, China, South Africa, Australia, New Zealand, The Friendly and Fiji Islands, Italy, and the strengthening of the older missions in the West Indies, British America and Western Africa. I have seen the annual income of the missions raised from £2,212 16s. 1d. to £145,750 17s. 10d., and the number of missionaries from thirty-two to many hundreds." Surely these words from the pen of so experienced a man sufficiently demonstrate that the vitality of Methodism has not departed. Mr. Jackson had the satisfaction of seeing before he died the communion of his heart everywhere extending its evangelical arm.

> His ego nec metas rerum, nec tempora, pono,
> Imperium sine fine didi.*

* Virgil's *Æneid*, b. I., 278.

Our retrospect, we think, has not been a discouraging one, and we may safely say that at no previous period have Methodist organisations been so numerous, or so fertile in beneficial results. In the matter of education the Wesleyans are alive to the necessities of the time, and have shewn that their voice is respected at the Education Department. There is no great philanthropic movement in which they do not take a part. The laymen, many of them successful in a brilliant age of commerce, and not forgetting the source from which all individual and national blessing proceedeth, have subscribed liberally to all schemes. And here we remember with gratitude the name of Sir Francis Lycett. Far beyond the circles of his own denomination that name is known and revered. It is synonymous with the highest form of Christian philanthrophy. But the man's weight in modern life is not to be measured solely by the splendid sums set apart with a noble regularity. The principles that underlie his giving are a model for the merchant princes of this country. To the men of commerce Sir Francis Lycett will for many a day yet to come offer one of the most signal examples of the unity of the religious spirit with the commerce of England. But deeper than this lies the essential piety and fidelity to truth by which our great layman has been characterised.

Hundreds of Wesleyan laymen are marked by a similar spirit. No church possesses a more liberal and a more active body of laymen. With their munificence they combine intelligence, zeal, and activity in relation to the agencies of the Church. Methodism is proud to rank amongst its laymen such men as Mr. Alderman Arthur, M.P., Mr. William McArthur,

M.P., Mr. W. S. Allen, M.P., and Mr. Samuel Waddy, M.P. These men manifest their zeal in the service of the body by taking an energetic part in the various committees. Many other names are worthy of mention; for example—J. W. Pocock, W. W. Pocock, J. S. Budgett, Isaac Holden, Mr. Jevons (Birmingham), James Barlow, T. Percival Bunting, J. E. Vanner, Isaac Hoyle, J.P., H. W. Fowler, Geo. H. Chubb, W. A. Duncan, James Duncan, Joshua Moss, John H. Gabriel, Percy W. Bunting, R. W. Perks, John Beauchamp, John Cooper, John Vanner, Sam R. Healey, Sir James Falshaw (Edinburgh), George Lidgett, Henry Avis, F. Howard (Bedford), T. F. C. May, Edward Holden, T. McMillan (Glasgow), Geo. Smith, and Richard Haworth.

These gentlemen may not be all alike in respect to the sums they have contributed to the different institutions of Methodism, but they are alike deserving of notice in regard to the eminent interest they have shewn in those institutions, giving their time and labour in order to promote their efficiency. The Wesleyans have inherited from many laymen, who have departed, not only legacies of money, but legacies of character. Can we think without reverence of the late Mr. Farmer, and Mr. Edward Corderoy, who was a man of great intellectual ability, and could speak in Exeter Hall with remarkable power? And is there any one in the Methodist Church acquainted with John Corderoy who does not respect him for his noble self-sacrifice and pre-eminent liberality in days which are remembered well.

But the crown of all efforts would appear to be the Thanksgiving Fund. From almost every point of

view, this movement is to be recognised with gratitude. It was commenced at a time when England was suffering from severe financial depression, when trade was in a state of paralysis, and when much deprivation existed in the country. Yet the wave of enthusiasm, started at City Road Chapel, where the ashes of Wesley repose, rolled rapidly over the country. The spirit of the first meeting seems to have been breathed into every succeeding one if we may judge from the list of subscriptions published week after week. A few voices of complaint were probably heard here and there, but they appear to have been speedily drowned in the general chorus of liberality which has been taken up by the smallest villages and hamlets, no less than by the large cities and towns. The success of the movement has created astonishment in the minds of many beyond the pale of the Wesleyan Church, and we cannot wonder that the English clergy, shewing a willingness to throw off any prejudices they may have inherited from their forerunners, are calling their flocks to witness the beneficence of the Methodists.

Perhaps it will be hereafter pointed out that the year 1878 was the best year in which to commence such a movement. And already we have noticed that the leaders in other bodies have gathered the significance of the example set by the Wesleyan Church. Those with clear vision have seen how fine was the opportunity for testing the love of Methodists to their distinctive principles. The value of all giving is to be ultimately tried by the sacrifice it involves. The great gift of redemption is infinitely valuable because it was God's own Son that walked on earth in mortal form and

began and ended His career in sacrifice. So it is by the principle of self-denial that the ultimate value of this last Methodist offering will be tested. The greatest result of the Thanksgiving Fund will not be the clearing away of financial encumbrances. It will have better fruit than that. Our spiritual life becomes so sluggish at times that we need something to arouse us. Periods of ease and tranquil repose beget lassitude and inactivity. Dr. Vaughan, the late Master of the Temple, touched upon this point in an address lately delivered in his new sphere of labour. He said "People tell us that times of depression are bad times in which to appeal to the generosity of mankind. I deny the fact altogether. Times of depression give us just that one thing, for lack of which the Church perishes in the best of times—that is, the spirit of seriousness. You will remember a great French statesman said, "Give us one serious man." That is the cry of the Church day by day. It is this frivolity fostered by luxury; this luxury by overgetting; this scrambling and grasping and greed, in the midst of which the business of the world is carried on in prosperous times, that does the mischief. With a return of depression, we may hope will come back something of a return of seriousness, and surely no Christian can affect to forget that it is not the largest haver, the greatest giver, or the greatest gift, that is always most acceptable."*

The Thanksgiving Fund has no doubt served such a purpose as Dr. Vaughan mentions. But it has done more. It has revealed the fact that the Methodists are soundly loyal to their own economy, anxious that their own principles shall be fairly and fully propagated.

*Address at Llandaff, April 1879.

Looking back over the years cursorily scanned we find ground for hope. Not without defects, not without indifference, we yet see that substantial progress has been made. Agitators have seen prophecies falsified but loyal adherents have inherited satisfaction and renown.

CHAPTER II.

THE PRIMARY ELEMENT IN METHODISM.

METHODISM may be said to be synonymous with the purest form of what is generally known as evangelical truth. One may say that the primary element in Methodism is the attitude of the earnest mind towards the more practical development of Christianity. Wesley put heart religion before polemics. Without heart religion he held "all learning to be but splendid ignorance, pompous folly, and vexation of spirit." This was the key-stone of his fuller life, as it was that of his system. He and his coadjutors bent their energies almost wholly towards one central point, namely, the perpetual insistence of the necessity for regeneration. The whole economy of the Church was developed from this basis. After a lapse of so many years, after experience of wealth, extended schemes, influence, status, and the like, with their almost unavoidable temptations to compromise of principles originally stern and unbending, the inquiry is often made, even amongst the Wesleyans themselves, as to whether they maintain their distinctive character as evangelists. This inquiry, plainly stated, is the question of earnestness or zeal in relation to those things considered by the body so

vital to a genuine religion. The first and the greatest feature in the men who influenced so largely the moral life of England in the last century was the earnestness with which they applied themselves to their work. Does this quality continue to characterise the ministry?

Some light may possibly be thrown upon such an inquiry if we take a glance at the general features of Methodism as reflected in its ministry, and the agencies connected therewith. And we begin by at once confessing that the prospect is not for us a cheerless one, though we are ready to acknowledge defects and shortcomings. It is easy to be a prophet of evil, but we envy not the mantle of such prophesy. We have confidence in the future. Methodism possesses all the resources requisite for aggressive work, that is to say, the proper basis is laid for working to the best advantage. The scale is correct, but of course we want it enlarged. The central conceptions are wrought out; we have to act upon them. The whole machinery is at command; we have simply to go on infusing a larger and still larger spirit to make it tell with a wider force upon a regenerated world. No doubt there is room for extension, and for great extension, in all branches of the Methodist work. That will always be so. What we contend for is that the ecclesiastical machine is in good order, and not "ready to perish," as some have asserted.

It will be generally admitted, as we have observed, that the essential constituent of a good ministry is *earnestness*. How do we stand in relation to that quality? Without it no ministry can be successful in the higher sense. It is not unnatural that in pur-

suing this inquiry we should be tempted to revert for a moment to the days of the antecessors in the ministry, to look at the men who possessed apostolic zeal and vigour of earnest conviction,

> Such as in the martyrs glowed,
> Dying champions for their God.

And here we enter upon a wide field, luxuriant, full of pleasant pasture, not a dry and thirsty land where no water is, but a fertile valley with abundance of fruit. What associations crowd upon us as we think of the early preachers! We often forget how much we are indebted to them. Their lives are singularly interesting, some of them full of quaint humour, most of them burning with a steady and holy fire. The late Mr. George Henry Lewes, in his very admirable life of Goethe, points out that the very existence of the poet depended upon a continuance of his art. A similar remark might be applied to the men whom we have before our vision. Their happiness was involved in the continuous prosecution of a mission which had the highest of all purposes. They had to take up a work left undone by the English Church. They had to change the face of England. It was theirs to carry out Puritanism in its noblest aspect. They cut themselves clear of the sterner forms of the religion of a former age, but they reproduced in the bloom of youthful vigour the spirit that sought to spread holiness in the land. Never did a band of men set themselves to a better work. They were the friends of all and the enemies of none. Ignoring the belief held in some philosophical quarters that a nation could not be changed

suddenly, they went about with the torch of zeal spreading light and life, and subsequent historians acknowledged with gratitude and with eloquence the far shining work accomplished.

There is a disposition in some quarters to suppose that the early preachers have been superseded in manner and in spirit. Now we believe in progress and in men adapting themselves to new exigencies in new times. A change of attitude of mind may be more than a mere accident or the result of a fickle disposition. It may be a law of our being and for us unavoidable. Some of the most comprehensive intellects of the age have undergone vast changes in relation to great movements, and it has been frequently seen that such changes have involved very high moral and intellectual qualities. We would not wish, therefore, to make Methodism stationary or to impose upon it the customs, the style, or the methods of earlier days. We desire to see growing opportunities given for wider and more exact scholarship, and for every kind of intellectual culture. No church can suffer by the accumulation of its acquirements, nor can the thought which springs from long and careful study be injurious if it be united with the richer graces of the spirit without which all culture is in vain as far as it regards a ministry professedly Evangelical. We welcome, therefore, the Theological Institutions, and will hail with satisfaction any well organised attempt to extend still further their operation. We are aware that some look with timid hearts upon the expanding influence of these institutions. But we have no misgiving, though we desire to insist as strongly as we can on the great necessity of keeping active the spiritual glow and

animation of the old time. The Wesleyans must carry the old fire into the new machinery.

So we return to the point with which we started, and for a moment we desire to cast our eye over the biographies of the early preachers. It is needless to point out the far shining excellences of those men. Anything we can say in their favour will not increase their reputation ; anything that we might say against them would not dim for a moment the splendour of their names. It is simply our wish to catch a gleam of the light that shone resplendent from some of their countenances and which coloured all their work. On the whole they were men of signal natural abilities, and if sometimes their speech was rude or uncouth, their preaching eminently suited the times, and they carried with them light and life—a light that shone into the darkest corners and a life that pulsated amid moral corruption and decay. The heritage they have left is that of a great example of quickened spiritual existence. Their language was full of warmth, the warmth of inspiration of soul, the breath of a heart-life that was throbbing deeply and one which was chastened by the sorest trials and the profoundest sorrows. They were in short a band of earnest men.

And now we revert to the question :—Has the Wesleyan Ministry this earnestness still? Are the preachers of to-day as zealous as their antecessors? Do they infuse as much spiritual vigour into their discourses as did the early ministers? We are not now referring to the question of intellectual supremacy or acquirements in knowledge : it is the mere question of earnestness, the primary element in Methodism, in other words spiritual breadth. Now

we are well aware that some hold that they are not, and that in this respect the Methodist ministry has declined. It occurs to us that the inquiry is not one to be settled by a brief and convenient "yes" or "no." Those who assert that the Methodist ministry is less powerful spiritually now than it was one hundred years ago, have probably examined the question very superficially. It is one of the many common places of our time to say that the pulpit has lost its power. There is a good deal of drivel talked about the newspaper press having succeeded to the place formerly occupied by the pulpit and wholly supplanted it. Mr. Carlyle somewhere remarks that the true Church of England now lies in the editors of its newspapers. But this is one of those exaggerations that sometimes escape from the pen of the greatest thinkers. The statement savours a little of epigram. But to pass from this digression we observe first that it is important to inquire whether earnestness or zeal can only take some special form. Must it always clothe itself in the same dress? Has it only one language, one form of expression for every age? Is there only one way of manifesting anxiety for the high interests of those committed to our charge? Surely not. The forces of material nature are everywhere diverse. The thunderstorm is succeeded by the gentle light that falls imperceptibly and without a breath. When the rattling noise has ceased to reverberate amongst the everlasting hills the sunlight falls on ragged rocks and fertile valleys, and natural philosophers tell us that far reaching influences are exerted. The varying phases of the material creation may in some measure serve to illustrate the variety of means used in the great Divine plan for the build-

ing up of the Church. It was only the stern evangelical energy of Wesley and his coadjutors that could change the face of England at a time when it was seriously defaced by corruption, and the arm of the English Church was not mighty to save. The ecclesiastical forces of the age were withered, and there was no one to put life into them until Wesley and Whitfield arose, and touched them as with hallowed fire. It was a boisterous time, and the agency required was a rough and ready one. It was not truth in the shape of theological speculation that was wanted ; it was not a dissertation on the systems of philosophers that had so long perplexed the schools. What was wanted was a trumpet voice of warning—a cry to leave degradation and sin and enter the paths of holiness and life.

We come now to hazard the assertion that the Methodist ministry of our day reveals this quality of earnestness, though the manifestation of it may be different. It may be found in multiplied forms. Take a glance for a moment at the more prominent figures in the Connexion. Our readers will understand that we are not about in this work to place names in any supposed order of merit. We do not profess to have an omnipotent knowledge of the ministry. We will not be so presumptuous as to determine that this man is better than that man. We must write as experience and knowledge dictate. But it seems very natural to begin with some of the men holding official places.

Does the Conference Office show any falling-off in evangelical vigour? Two names are immediately suggested, both widely respected. Dr. Jobson has

disclosed a mental character, a tenacity of purpose, and a capacity for earnest work which has merited and gained the esteem of the body. Benjamin Gregory early won a reputation as a scholar, a clear thinker, and a man of solid acquirements. The Conference has placed him at the head of an important department, in succession to a man of great weight, Benjamin Frankland, whom we are desirous of mentioning here just by way of a small recognition of his eminent services. Mr. Gregory has shown a disposition to change the form of our literature without sacrificing its evangelical character; and the Connexion has accepted it as a wise arrangement. In this new sphere he is showing great activity, and we hear that Methodist literature is more widely read.

We are certain that Mr. Gregory, while making the *Magazine* more popular, will keep clear of the fatal breath of an exceedingly dangerous literary time. The cry after sensationalism is really alarming. Much of the literature of the period partakes of the spirit of the drama of which we hear woful complaints in high quarters. The English stage is sinking lower and lower into an abyss which is already fatal; and it will need something stronger than the remarks of the Bishop of Manchester to arouse Englishmen in this matter. Literature is taking on the same taint as the drama. The tendency shown in recent days to make books racy and popular is carrying us a little too far, and the force is being accelerated. We would like to see literature made attractive to the modern intelligence. We would not recall the heavy sentences of Johnson, though admiring his massive thought. But it is a long jump

from Johnson to Rhoda Broughton, to Ouida and to Miss Braddon, and a host of others, who rule at the circulating libraries with an almost imperial sway. George Eliot is an exception, though not free from some defects of construction. In her reflective vein, which is her highest sphere as an artist, she attains a rare splendour. In subtle and tender thought she is unrivalled. Her works contain many noble passages which one may read again and again, never growing weary, but gathering a fresh charm every time. But the great majority of novels are lacking in the qualities that make for strength of mind, that give vigour to moral purpose, and induce tastes that become recreative in the higher relationships of life. Any one therefore who comes before us

> To touch the finer movements of the mind,
> And with the moral beauty charm the heart.

deserves well of his countrymen, and with these remarks we pass with hope from the Book Room, believing that it is in wise as well as talented hands, and that there is still a clear eye resting upon everything that would stimulate the religious earnestness of the people.

In other departments we recognise the primary quality we have mentioned. The Rev. William Arthur has been compelled to retire from active labour, but his name still sounds through the Connexion like the perpetual murmur of the sea. His life throughout has been a continual manifestation of earnest living. His works are tempered with a noble seriousness of purpose. Not alone among his brethren he yet stands conspicuous for the respect

given to him by members of other churches. As we shall have occasion to speak of Mr. Arthur when we come to deal with other aspects of our subject we pass on to other names. Dr. Punshon represents Methodist eloquence. What is the distinctive feature of his eloquence? Is not its very base the quality we have before us? As Macaulay, Jeffrey, Sydney Smith, and Arthur Helps are among the most brilliant essayists, so Dr. Punshon is ranked amongst the most brilliant preachers. He is more chaste than Spurgeon, has the literary faculty in a higher degree, and whilst the latter appeals with greater force to a miscellaneous mass, the former has the power to touch with a finer hand, and to attune to finer issues the cultured congregation. We know of few preachers that combine so many excellent qualities. Punshon's strength lies where the best strength should lie, that is in the heart. A purely intellectual force in the Church is for the great purpose of the ministry little more than a barren waste. A full emotional nature allied with a quick, appreciative, and keen mental faculty are the materials out of which we get Divine life in the pulpit, always of course associated with the other graces, without which no man ought to preach the gospel.

It is gratifying to know that at City Road Chapel, which no Methodist can pass without a feeling of reverence, there is an earnest ministry. John Baker is always worth hearing and Thomas Champness exhibits apostolic zeal. Passing on we may say that Edward Telfer disarms any prejudices one may have against the Scotch. And though there are some Scotch things we do not like, we confess to a warmth

for the covenanting element scarcely ever absent from the Divine before us. We would mention here with respect the labours of John Evans, Robert Morton, Richard W. Allen, Henry Pollinger, Joseph Cranswick, John Hutcheon, M.A., George Mather, George Curnock, Thomas J. Dilks, John H. Grubb, Sidney Duncan, Richard Green, Richard Hardy, John McKenny, James Chalmers, Thomas Allen, Charles H. Kelly, George J. Dixon, Stephen Cox, James D. Tetley, Thomas Thompson, M.A., John Hartley, P. N. Andrews, Thomas Chope, Josiah Banham, W. D. Walters, Walford Green. These preachers disclose in varied ways the elements of Methodist earnestness—a sense of the importance of solid evangelical truth as essentially suited to the congregations they individually address.

In various forms we think that a close observer will find in many of the London preachers precisely the same qualities that commended themselves with such force in a former time. The wave of spiritual earnestness that has rolled down is so large that it continues to move the Wesleyans still. The practical aim of other days is yet seen, the noble endeavour to touch the conscience of the people, and to effect a revolution in the heart. When Methodism ceases to strike there it will enter upon a stage of decline. In the preaching of Theophilus Woolmer, for example, there is a distinct aim at heart searching. There is nothing showy here, no attempt at gaudy rhetoric : what he says is forceful, and his appeals are persuasive, never failing to influence in the right direction. An occasional anecdote, always told in its appropriate place, increases the interest and adds to the profit

with which we listen to this man. A similar remark may be made of George Olver, a man, to use a common expression, with no nonsense about him, with a clear and steady mental eye, and an equally steady heart. John Rattenbury too maintains a reputation for strong evangelical build, and has exercised in his time wide spiritual sympathies. It seems natural here also to mention the name of Alex. M'Aulay. Inheriting the best traditions of the Scotch mind and the best instincts of the Scotch character, he brought his talents to English soil, and has used them to the very highest advantage. He would not have been an unworthy colleague of Dr. Chalmers in the working out of his great mission schemes. Gervase Smith has quite falsified some petty and ill tempered criticisms that were made of him when he was a young man. A minister who ascends the presidential chair must possess striking qualities. In this case we have a good combination of intelligent zeal with considerable administrative ability. Richard Roberts deserves the credit due to great diligence in overcoming difficulties in the early part of his career. He ranks amongst the eloquent. We have much respect for his talents. The only thing we do not like is the tendency to arrange sermons on mathematical principles. To have five divisions and five heads under each may appear wonderful, and no doubt it involves cleverness; but there is a danger that the fifth head of the fifth division may prove far fetched. With this gentle remark we can pass on and say that we look upon many of his sermons as fine gospel appeals. Amongst the band of earnest men we could class George O. Bate, a man of solid as well as considerable attainments,

and who exercises a beneficial influence wherever he goes. There are other names equally deserving of mention. We have no reticence in declaring that the Wesleyan pulpit in London is as remarkable for its earnest tone as the pulpit of any other body. We have not arrived at these conclusions negligently or with undue haste. It has been our aim to find out whether this quality of earnestness exists in sufficient degree to enable us to take hope for the future in the midst of an age said to be crumbling in its theological structure.

Having said all this we hasten to disclaim all ideas of perfection in Methodist work. The vital power which we have been seeking in the Wesleyan pulpits, we wish to see increased in large degree. It can and ought to be increased. There is nothing to tempt a minister to slacken his energies. On the contrary, there is everything to induce him to double his diligence. In no previous age was evangelical preaching more needed than now. There is a disposition, here and there, to believe that the times being so remarkable for intellectual inquiry, so rich in their accumulated acquirements of knowledge, so full of the scientific spirit, and withal so educated and refined, that some new way of preaching the gospel is necessary. The cry still goes forth that we ought to have men in the pulpits who could refute or answer the speculations and conclusions of the men of science and the philosophers tabulated now and again in the newspapers. When John Tyndall speaks at the Midland Institute, and gives us some strange views respecting the freedom of the will, or when he discourses at Belfast and scares many theologians, some tell us we are bound to

reply in our pulpits, lest hearers or members be dragged away by the teaching of a new time. It will be an evil day for the Methodist Church when the ministry occupies itself in the pulpit discussing the fresh problems suggested by men for whose great learning we have the highest respect. The ministry was never instituted for such a purpose. At all events few will contend that that is its primary duty. As it was an evangelical, earnest, holy ministry that saved England in the 18th century, so it must be the same, or a similar, agency that must work still if we are to preserve the real strength of our national life. Touching upon this subject one of our most eminent modern theologians has said—

"It is not permitted us too curiously to search the hidden providences of our humanity; but one thing we cannot fail to notice: that a return to simple undisguised affections—to natural and veracious speech—to earnest and inartificial life—has characterised every great and noble period, and all morally powerful and venerable men. To such taste and affections, and to the secret rule of conscience which presides among them, we must learn to trust, whatever be the seductions of opinion and the sophistries of expediency, and even the pleadings of the speculative intellect. When thus we fear to quench his spirit, God will not suffer our time to be a dreary and unconsecrated thing. Swept by the very borders of His garment we shall not look far for His glorifying presence. The poorest outward condition will have no power to obliterate the solemnity from life. Nay, of nothing may we be more sure than this: that if we cannot sanctify our present lot we could sanctify no

other. Our heaven and our Almighty Father are there or nowhere. The obstructions of that lot are given for us to heave away by the concurrent touch of a holy spirit, and labour of strenuous will; its gloom for us to tint with some celestial light; its mysteries are for our own worship; its sorrows for our trust; its perils for our courage; its temptations for our faith. Soldiers of the Cross, it is not for us, but for our Leader and our Lord, to choose the field; it is ours, taking the station that he assigns, to make it the field of truth and honour, though it be the field of death."

In recent years there has been considerable discussion on the subject of preaching. Numerous books and pamphlets have been written purporting to point out the best way to proclaim the gospel. Undoubtedly the nature of gospel teaching is of great importance. Whatever may be the character of the pulpit message in other Churches the Wesleyans must continue to insist on strictly evangelical teaching. That was the primary element in Wesley's discourses; that must be the chief feature in those of his successors. Methodism without an earnest ministry would be shorn of its power—stript indeed of its claim to existence. The outward drapery of the earlier men need not be adopted, but the soul which breathed in them must be preserved if the cities and villages are to yield as before to the touch of persuasive truth. The England of to-day requires the same vital message that was rung out amidst the "highways and hedges." England had never more need of an earnest ministry. Romanism is everywhere active; unsettled opinions, the result of rationalistic teaching, are fashionable; Ritualism wins its

way with amazing strides ; and a general indifference to the more serious duties of life marks large portions of the community. It is not a speculative pulpit that will meet these mischievous forces. But a Church whose various workers are fired with holy zeal ; strength of conviction, and deep religious earnestness ; and all these combining into one primary element, extending through all the Church's schemes, may confidently hope to make an impression on the outward face and the inward working of human society.

CHAPTER III.

THE INTELLECTUAL CHARACTER OF THE MINISTRY.

HAVING looked at the quality which forms, so to speak, the basis of a successful ministry, we proceed to enter upon a more intricate inquiry. What is the intellectual character of the body that has played so great a part in modern English history? Are they progressing in knowledge as the age is said to progress? They are getting a better educated band of men. That is the result of the development of the theological institutions, no doubt combined with the more liberal training received by boys born happily in times of educational activity and when schools and colleges are abounding more and more. But it is not so much of acquirements that we wish to speak. It is of that native intellectual vigour which was a marked characteristic of the early followers of the apostle of Methodism. It is generally acknowledged that many of these men possessed a rare fibre of brain power. In some notable instances the classics gave beauty to their thought, and they had the distinct advantage of inheriting almost direct advice and counsel in the matter of their book reading from Wesley himself, from Adam Clarke, from Watson and Benson, than

whom there were few better judges. This was no small gain. To control or guide the reading of minister of the gospel wisely is a great service to the Church and to society. It is an old proverb that men are known by the company they keep. It is as accurate to say that our minds may be measured by the books we study. Men, as spiritual forces, may be gauged to a large extent by the character of the authors they peruse. Our nature becomes assimilated to that with which we have most communion.

There can be no doubt that the strength of the early preachers was in considerable measure gathered from the old divines, and from such metaphysical and theological writers as have attained the standard of unquestionable excellency. Some of the far shining works of other days are perhaps less in demand now than they were, or at least they are relegated occasionally to upper shelves of libraries, where they remain undisturbed. Doddridge, Jeremy Taylor, Hooker, Butler, and Paley are doubtless part and parcel of every student's collection of mental furniture. But are they looked into with the constant, clear, and comprehending gaze that eventually creates irresistible fascination, and makes direct for power? Of course the authorities that stand out in clear relief above all others, such as Milton, Shakespeare, Pope and Dryden, Bacon and Spenser are familiar to every student more or less. But there is a type of mind that ought to become the preacher's special study, and this is to be found in those practical theological treatises that have made the old English divines a source of inexhaustible power. If less attention is given to the writers referred to, the reason is not far to seek. The nineteenth century is a

marvel in respect to the enormous quantity of cheap literature daily issuing from the press. We are constantly coming into contact with it, and it is no exaggeration to say that it requires some force of will to keep clear of much of the stream. We have moreover to face the public taste which also in its turn acts and reacts upon us. That taste is not at present of the highest order, as we have before mentioned. All these things are against us. There is, too, a species of popularly written theological and practical religious books abroad in the land. As modern improvements in civilization have made eating more of a luxury, so modern writers have continued to make reading, and particularly religious reading, more easy. We can dine now in more luxuriant rooms, but there is a temptation to recline afterwards, instead of walking into the bracing air, which as an exercise promotes digestion. So we revel in the light and airy pages, and become impatient of those that are weighted with the thought which has to be sought out with energy. Dickens and Thackeray are thus more acceptable to many than Butler and Paley and those of a similar school, or a dip into the higher German literature. Mr. Frederic Harrison, in an able paper published in the *Fortnightly Review*, drew attention to this subject, and made some startling assertions respecting the tastes of the educated reading class. He says, "We need to be reminded every day how many are the books of inimitable glory, which, with all our eagerness of reading, we have never taken in our hands. It will astonish most of us to find how much of our industry is given to the books which leave no mark. How often we take in the litter of the printing press,

whilst a crown of glory and rubies is offered us in vain!"*

There can be no doubt that there is considerable force in what Mr. Harrison asserts in his article, and most literary men would acknowledge it. What he says brings us to the point we have in view. Whilst the important element of earnestness is visibly reproduced in the Wesleyan pulpits as a general rule, we gather from some of the preachers that their book-reading is not after the model of those who preceded them. The appeals to-day have the same distinctive end in view, but they are not supported in all cases by the massive strength that our antecessors drew from volumes which they perused amongst "the highways and hedges." The divisions of the sermons announced by some of the younger ministers disclose a better acquaintance with what may be called strictly modern literature than an intimacy with the suggestive authors of earlier days, and whose recreative force can scarcely yet be said to have been exhausted. This doubtless might be said also of other Churches. Indeed it may be affirmed of the greater portion of the reading public. But in the case of those more immediately under review it has perhaps a deeper meaning, for the character of Methodist preaching is ultimately to be measured by the amount of force it exerts on the consciences of men. The Wesleyan Conference has never exhibited an anxiety to see its ministers parade themselves in the pulpit as the professional antagonists of Darwin or Spencer, Mill or Buckle, or the author of *The Supernatural Religion*. As far as we have understood the policy of the body,

* *Fortnightly Review*, April 1879.

their chief concern has been to see a powerful ministry in the sense of reaching the human heart, getting hold of its affections, and fixing them upon things that lie immeasurably beyond the fields of current scientific and speculative controversy, with its feverish debates and unsettling tendencies. This is a wise policy, and it is one that even those having but little sympathy with the primary objects of the Church will admit. We are not quite sure that some of the foremost thinkers would not commend the soundness of the course. For it is now more generally acknowledged, that apart from the fierce controversies that distract our time, there is a great field for the preacher of the gospel. How often do we find that when speculation has had the amplest scope, and has said its say, it returns with simplicity to "the truths that never can be proved," and seems to linger around them with the feelings of old age, when the memories of youth have come rushing like a flood of sunlight after a storm. We conclude, therefore, that in view of the high objects we have, care should be taken not to leave the old writers in dusty corners, and not to give ourselves undue anxiety about the speculations flaunted in our faces day after day in the books of the period. In order to gain a knowledge of Comte, we need not throw aside Butler.

There is a kind of intellectual power that may for the purposes of the pulpit be cultivated with advantage without loading the sermon with heavy polemics. A systematic reading of the old divines is the best basis for such a culture. The preachers of our day would do well to avoid as far as possible the tendency to extract three divisions out of every text, such as

considering in the first place what the apostle saw, secondly what the apostle did, and thirdly what we should do. Or to take another common type, first the thing lost, secondly the means used to find it, thirdly the rejoicings that took place at the finding. Such divisions as these invariably disclose a lack of intellectual power. And we believe that it does not in all cases arise from the want of native vigour, but from bad habits of method. The style under remark is apt to repel the intelligent hearer and give him the idea that the preacher is talking mere drivel. We believe that the large number of books on homiletics have had a good deal to do with the mischief, and the sooner the wholesale dabbling in such works is discountenanced the better. There is another objectionable form in which some preachers come before their hearers. This is seen in a self complacent disposition to parade a little knowledge of Greek, which is designed to convey the idea that a larger knowledge or wider acquaintance with the Greek language is lying behind. Such pedantry is generally visible when the preacher tells us that he prefers a preposition or a pronoun to be rendered in some other way. It is perhaps a harmless exhibition, and its worst tendency is to provoke a smile at the expense of the preacher. But those who dabble in such things would do well to assume before they begin that there may be one or two individuals in the congregation possessing some slight knowledge of the Greek Testament.

It is impossible to formulate a science of preaching, but a keener observation of daily life, even in its most trivial details, would afford the pulpit teacher an

example and better range of matter than that which is supplied in homiletical books. All men have originality more or less if they would use it. To be an effective instrument in the Church a man ought to look inwards upon himself. Let men question their own souls. There is much there that will bear examination and convey useful lessons. No one will contend for novel or quixotic methods of treatment of gospel truth, but it is given in some degree to every man to adopt his own course.

With these preliminary remarks we proceed to record such impressions as have struck us in connection with some of the ministers whom we have heard and for whom we have a high esteem.

Though not accepting in every case the method adopted by the preachers we have been priviliged to hear, we are inclined to think that on the whole the present rank and file of Wesleyan ministers will compare favourably with any other body with the same evangelical ends. The time placed at the disposal of a Methodist preacher does not enable him perhaps to pursue the walk of pure scholarship at such length as may be done by the bishops or some of the canons. Yet there have been scholars amongst the Methodists, commentators and divines of theological depth. Not coveting the disposition to rival other sects in the matter of accumulated acquirements in learning the Conference has rather sought to keep a steady outlook on practical work. But one cannot fail to observe on taking a wide survey that there are a good many men possessing high intellectual power. These will be found not solely amongst the older men, but in the ranks of the younger preachers. Taking a glance at a few

of those who may be said to have won their reputatations we might say that the following are marked by breadth of mental grasp in addition to other qualities. Dr. Pope, Dr. Rigg, William Arthur, Dr. Punshon, Ebenezer Jenkins, John Farrar, Dr. Osborn, Benjamin Gregory, W. F. Moulton, Gervase Smith, Dr. Jobson, Marmaduke Osborn, Dr. James, John Dury Geden, Henry W. Williams, Joseph Bush, John Harvard, Samuel Coley, John Walton, Marshall Randles, and William Hudson.

Several of these gentlemen are known outside the range of their own denomination, but it has often occurred to us that some ministers are not well known beyond their own sphere, not because they are lacking in qualities for which ministers in other communions are sometimes lauded, but because the steady adhesion of the men to Methodist principles shuts them out from the popularity acquired by certain divines. The class we have in view, often poise before the world in consequence of strange views in doctrine, or the assertion of some particular statement which astonishes the community. The man who works steadily in his own groove, fitting activity to duty, need not expect the notice of men, at least in the shape of a general notoriety. Yet in such grooves we cannot doubt that there are numbers earnestly working, and earnestly thinking, who covet nothing but the approval of self-conscious duty. It is but rare that one sees the name of a Wesleyan minister in the *Times* or *Daily News* in connection with some project of belief or no belief that has rendered him notorious. The heretics are the men who thus get hoisted on to some pinnacle of notoriety. Their intellectual qualities are then esti-

mated, and most of the heretics are discovered to be remarkable men in respect to their mental constitution. But after all in some cases this popularity is little worth. It has frequently struck us that the motive of the revolutionists in theological dogma is not so much the search after truth, or the contention for a just freedom of thought, but rather a desire to gain popular attraction. Thus we see a fatal tendency in some Churches towards things new and strange. A desire to astonish, to amaze, to confound, to perplex, seems one of the elements of our poor human nature. It takes manifold forms. Sometimes it is asserted under the guise of an extravagant ritual, sometimes in opposition to the standards of the Church, sometimes in curious subjects discussed in the pulpit, and now and again in attempts at great originality in strange gesture or action of manner. Some men will make themselves ludicrous in the pulpit in order to attain the notoriety of being eccentric or original, when the fact is their originality arises not from the thing they say, but from the place in which they say it. It still remains one of the mysteries of the age how certain men can talk utter nonsense, act like clowns, and draw crowds after them, whilst the man who has tarried long in silent hours, having only the stars in the heavens for his companions, gets but scanty notice though he comes forth with thought and wisdom clothed in chaste and beautiful diction, and with a real spiritual message.

This brings us to our point, namely, that it is erroneous to assert that the Methodist pulpit is intellectually weaker than that of other bodies because the names of the ministers do not travel so far as

those in other bodies, or because we do not hear so much about them. A Methodist pulpit is no place for theological experiment, or doctrinal fireworks, or theatrical exhibitions. The men whom we have mentioned would discourage such things. Quiet toil in hidden regions need not be accepted as equivalent to barrenness in mental work. The Wesleyans have their own share of preachers characterised by the graces of culture, by clear intellectual vision, and by argumentative power.

It is impossible from our standpoint to measure fully the latent intellectual forces in the Connexion. To the younger men falls the responsibility of transmitting the inheritance of spiritual energy, and the reputation of mental power bequeathed to them. One source of safety will lie in a calm acceptance of the place assigned to each in the economy of the itinerant system. The great Newton said that the difference between him and other men was patience. In this restless and tumultuous time of competition, scarcely any one can hope to be kept free of the desire for place and honour. The young men of the Wesleyan Church are no doubt as open to this susceptibility as others, but it is impossible for all to find the realisation of long-cherished hopes and fond desires. A true attitude of mind, however, will enable them to learn that the wealds of Kent, the lanes of Surrey, the villages of Yorkshire and Lancashire, and the Scotch moors, afford as ample a range of intellectual as well as spiritual toil as the busy centres of Manchester, Leeds, or London. Meanwhile, we think the Connexion need not fear for the reputation of the future. There are young men

of promise ; there are some of middle age, who will yet acquire greater breadth and force, so that they may take the place of those who have borne the burden and heat of the day.

It is with some reluctance that we venture to mention names lest our remarks seem partial. But we have no party ends in view, and no interests to serve except the interest of the Connexion. Mr. Frederick Macdonald has acquired the reputation of being a young man of great promise. This is no doubt well merited. Scholarly, chaste, refined, and fluent, he has adorned the younger ranks of the preachers. Apart from his pulpit abilities he has attained to some eminence as a platform speaker. He is fertile in illustration—sometimes a little too fertile—and possesses the art of moving a popular audience. A dispassionate critic, a calm listener, might object to some things in his oratory, but the mass of his hearers will see in Mr. Macdonald a genuine persuasive speaker. He is from our point of view somewhat too rhetorical. But Lord Beaconsfield said lately that time brings truth. Time also brings thought and maturity, and these will doubtless come to the great hope of the younger men. Mr. Macdonald's oratory might be improved by a regard to action. He does not lack action. On the contrary he has a little too much of it. For ourselves we do not like to see the whole body swinging to and fro while some nicely rounded period is being delivered from the platform of Exeter Hall. But with these mild observations we take leave to add that Mr. Macdonald is a young man of whom the Connexion ought to be proud.

Speaking of Exeter Hall we are reminded of other

names. This hall is a good place to test Methodist eloquence and enthusiasm. It was here we believe that Dr. Punshon won the greater fame when he put Bunyan before the people in such a manner as was never seen before. The same platform has been witness to an eloquence entirely different from Dr. Punshon's. There is no more passionate speaker in the Body than William O. Simpson. He has a large heart, and a voice full of pathetic energy. He can move a popular assembly to a marvellous extent. This is no small tribute to a man who has unquestionably rendered signal service to his Church. We once heard of a gentleman whom nothing could move. He was stoical in every meeting, and no orator, not even Punshon, Spurgeon, Bright or Gladstone could move him. He happened to wander into Exeter Hall when William O. Simpson was speaking, and immediately became excited. We presume that Mr. Simpson must have been giving the piece about David and the little stone from the brook, which seems to us to have done yeoman service many a time. For ourselves we are of opinion that a little less of David and the stone would be acceptable. But we do not care to conceal our admiration of a man who can make such an impression out of so slender materials. Those who want to understand Mr. Simpson's full power must not be content with reading his speeches in the *Recorder*. They must go and hear him in Exeter Hall.

Mr. John Bond's eloquence is also noteworthy. He, too, has the power to sway a large audience. He has a fulness of energy that renders him popular wherever he goes. His worst fault is an occasional

disposition to trot out a favourite story having no conceivable connection with the matter in hand. But his preaching and speaking are wholesome, and we believe him to be a useful man. He has the great merit of clearness and a voice of considerable compass. Another man, four years Mr. Bond's senior in the ministry, deserves mention. Mr. Henry W. Holland has led an active life, and has gained a reputation in various fields. He has not only an eloquent tongue, but an easy flowing pen, which he has put to industrious use. He wrote an able work on *National Education*, which showed that he had mastered the whole controversy that raged so fiercely some ten or fourteen years ago. The work was widely read. Mr. Holland, we believe, has been requested to write for several influential journals, and comprehensive knowledge of most of the social and intellectual questions of the time, combined with practical experience, has rendered him an authority on some special subjects. He designed, and was mainly instrumental in launching, a scheme for the relief and extension of Methodism in Scotland, which revealed some statesmanlike qualities. He has, too, been the steady friend of working men, and has watched their interests sometimes in the face of obloquy and sacrifice. He is a little erratic, but very straightforward. Some accuse him of Radicalism, but those who know him best are aware that he is thoroughly constitutional in his respect for the opinions of others. He represents the activity of those brethren who wish to leaven outside circles with Methodist life. Younger in the ministry than either of the two men just mentioned is Mr. Frederic

Greeves. Entering in 1854 he soon won esteem for natural abilities carefully nurtured and developed. Mr. Greeves combines splendid evangelical force with refinement of diction and a good measure of intellectual power. His name is everywhere mentioned with respect, and his preaching is generally admired. His personal influence, too, is great, and wherever he has travelled he has left a steady influence behind. We make no claim to prophetic power, otherwise we might see in this man a future President of the Conference. Francis W. Greeves and John W. Greeves also deserve honourable mention, as also Josiah Pearson, Thomas Nattrass, and Isaac E. Page. The latter discharges an important function in disseminating a thorough Christian literature amongst the masses, and in seeking to promote the higher life. His religious zeal and talents go hand in hand. The circulation of pure literature is a high service at the present moment.

A year before Mr. Frederick Macdonald came out, Mr. William Nicholson (Lambeth) entered the ministry. Whilst adhering with reverence to all that is good in the old Methodist dispensation, he yet seeks to cherish and to enforce whatever may be fresh and beneficial in the new. He endeavours to make Methodism attractive to the young, but carefully avoids any sacrifice of religious principles. He seeks for beauty and charm everywhere, but not in the world, or rather not in the spirit of the world. Here we find no disposition to compromise—a valuable feature in an age full of compromises. He has no sympathy with the fashionable theology, and in this he is well supported by his colleague Mr. Thomas Featherstone-

haugh. Mr. Nicholson's predecessor was also a man of firm mental and evangelical build—we mean Mr. Joseph Smithies, now of Preston. He, too, is an earnest preacher. His sermons have backbone and brain, and carry weight. In the same field of labour Mr. John Rhodes (B) preached with great acceptance. Of longer standing than some of the men mentioned is Mr. Thomas Akroyd, Blackheath. He is a chaste speaker, a polished man, and he adds to these qualities an intellectual force which rendered him acceptable in the great seat of letters in the north as well as in other important spheres. Robert Newton Young may be similarly described. Apart from his attainments as a scholar he is a persuasive though an exceedingly quiet preacher. Here it is not the thunderstorm but the gentle light. A true receptive mind will feel the influence of this man. Clearness of statement is also a feature in the classical tutor. The Rev. J. Jackson Wray belongs to a different type of men. Masculine energy is not without its uses even in the Church, and the efforts of this man may be commended. He has succeeded in speaking with success in the great Newington Tabernacle. To keep the attention of Mr. Spurgeon's congregation for an hour is no small service. William L. Appleby also carries weight; his discourses are marked by a directness of aim, and if not brilliant they have other qualities which ought to command success. One can scarcely help mentioning the dead here, for the Mostyn Road Circuit is associated with the name of George Harvard, a most unassuming man, but great in the old divines and greater in the Scriptures. The Brixton Hill Circuit still finds able

and earnest men. In days gone by it saw some fine specimens of pulpit eloquence, and the circuit chapels are still centres of chaste and forcible teaching. Francis J. Sharr is no unworthy successor of a band of men known beyond the lanes of Brixton and the fields of Sydenham. Elevated in the tone of his soul, with a sharply defined religious feeling, and a penetrating intellect, he preaches with the demonstration of power. If not characterised by rugged grandeur, he is none the less welcome to men who have added the repose of thought to the flow of evangelical energy. He has a clear insight into the mind of Scripture, the inner spirit of the gospel, sees with clear vision its sublime adaptation to the deeper problems of human experience.

There are others who in an earnest manner combine zeal for active practical work with a steady examination of the subtler currents of thought as they traverse the crucial doctrines of the faith accepted at their ordination. Among these we would notice Mr. J. Robinson Gregory, a worthy son of a worthy father. Apart from his ministerial duties he has distinguished himself by a very able treatise on a question which has agitated the theological world considerably during the last two years. This book has won the favourable notice of some of the best English journals, and it deserves to be read widely in relation to the storm which Canon Farrar raised when he published his volume on *Eschatology*. Of the same age in the ministry is Mark Guy Pearce, who has attained a name beyond his own denomination for a species of literature which cultivates a new field. His talents are unique, and his books have enjoyed an extensive

circulation, and one given to but few men. We look upon them as healthy works, and sainted men and women throughout the Connexion have read them without endangering the keenness of their own spirituality. What greater tribute could we pay to Mark Guy Pearce.

Hugh R. Hughes, Allen Rees, William Spiers, William Waters, Thomas Featherstonehaugh, Joseph Exell, Henry W. Jackson, Henry McCullagh, Joseph Nettleton, George G. Findlay, J. Robinson, Henry Burton, Thomas Seed, John Bell (Lewisham), S. B. Coley, and Thomas J. Haughton may be classed among the younger preachers who have with diligent eye combined evangelical zeal with earnest thought and scholarly acquirements, a reverence for old landmarks with a desire to widen the field of Christian endeavour. Some of the young men have done great things in the lanes of the large cities and towns, and whilst doing this have kept their intellectual eye clear. The spirit of self-denial, so conspicuous an element in the character of the earlier men, may still be found, though working perhaps under different conditions. Many of them labour on, recognising that reward belongs to the distant but not doubtful future.

It is matter for gratitude, too, that the young men are looking ahead of them in many important matters. Not only is it a period when the truth must be maintained with tenacity, but society is undergoing vast changes at its very centre. New forces have been brought into play in modern Europe, and the times are full of impending change. Happily we are not alarmed at the

recent developments of socialism in some of the great capitals of Europe; but we can scarcely hope to escape entirely from the influences that beat under the surface of society, however remote they may be from us. Religion has to bring its power against the new Utopias, for it alone can preserve the balance of a society in which freedom shall be combined with law and order. At such a time a clear observing mental eye becomes doubly important. In a work recently published we read:—

"The antagonism of modern Socialists towards religion is one of the most deplorable aspects of the movement. It reflects the materialistic and irreligious tendency of the times. At the same time it has to be remembered that it is against religionists who would make religious ministers a sort of spiritual police to keep the people in order rather than against religion, as such, that most socialists direct their attacks. But it is to be hoped that this unreasonable and virulent opposition to religion is only a passing phase of modern socialism and that with increased efforts of ministers of religion to promote the true temporal and spiritual welfare of the people, the irreverent tone of the Socialistic press and the vituperative effusions of Socialistic leaders will cease as it becomes more and more recognised among them that true religion is the foundation of social morality and therefore Social happiness."*

Undoubtedly the materialistic tendencies of the times are powerful, passing into the very centre of

**Utopias.* By Rev. M. Kaufmann. p. 264.

the modern intelligence. There is a considerable amount of half knowledge abroad in the world, crude and imperfect notions of the more recent philosophical systems. The younger men, therefore, do well to seek as full a knowledge as possible of the doctrines set forth in the writings of such men as Mill, Spencer, Buckle, and the author of *The Supernatural Religion.* But they must exercise a double guard whilst doing this. In the first place they must take care not to neglect their primary work, and secondly they must not allow themselves to be carried hurriedly away to deductions or conclusions antagonistic to the doctrines they have accepted. The writers on the housetops of philosophical scepticism are men of brilliant talents, with full and ample scholarship, with imagination, genius and eloquence. All these things are of a persuasive kind, and our sympathies sometimes betray our judgment and reason. It is wise in the midst of doubt or uncertainty to remember one thing, namely, that no scheme has yet been found which will meet the profound mysteries and necessities of human nature except the great scheme of redemption. Mr. James Hinton, in his *Mystery of Pain,* has dealt with this subject in a manner that should secure for the work a general reading. He says, "Man has learned many things, but he has not learned how to avoid sorrows. Among his achievements the safeguard against wretchedness is wanting. Perhaps indeed he could scarcely be charged with exaggeration who should hold that the aggregate of man's unhappiness had increased with his increasing culture, and that the acuted sensibility and multiplied sources of distress more than outweigh

the larger area from which his pleasures are drawn and the more numerous means of alleviation at his command. At least it appears certain that the heaping up of the enjoyments, if ever it was designed as a means of producing happiness, has proved a signal failure. When we regard the general tone of feeling of our age, whether as expressed in its literature, in its social intercourse, or even more perhaps in its amusements, do we not find ourselves in presence of a society from which real gladness has well nigh died out, in which hope is almost extinct. Man's heart is wounded in these latter days; the bright dreams of his youth have vanished; the outpouring of his deepest passion recoils on himself with mockery; but he can attire himself in gorgeous apparel, and fare sumptuously every day. He can lay all lands under contribution, and make Nature serve him; he can even explore all knowledge, if he will abstain from asking any question that it truly concerns his manhood to have answered. But surely it is not now an open question whether pampered luxury or gratified curiosity can heal a wounded spirit."*

It has always occurred to us that there is a vast power in the Wesleyan Church that can be used in the direction hinted at by this writer, that is to say, we are placed in the order of Providence with immense capabilities for showing that there is only one way by which the "wounded spirit" can be healed. It is the function of the Body now, as it has ever been, to insist on the redemptive work of Christ as the one solution of the problem which the world insists on working out apart from "the man of sorrows." The

* Hinton's *Mystery of Pain*, p. 44.

deity of Christ is the principal question of contention in these days. The rationalising spirit of the age everywhere seeks for that which will square with the intellect. It is around the divinity of Christ that the fiercest battle will have to be waged. Not unreasonably, therefore, have many keen apprehensions as to the future. But the Wesleyans may console themselves that they as a Church, though subject to the impending danger, are as safe as any other body. One thing gives hope. No encouragement is given by the fathers to loose thinking upon so vital a question as the divinity of the Saviour. And we feel assured that the more mature brethren in the ministry continue to exercise a powerful influence upon the younger men. And it is to this point that we wish to call attention. Elsewhere we have spoken at length of the relation of the Church to dogma.

It is delightful to think of the influence of age upon youth. It is a narrow spirit that would impress upon a young man the opinion, that in listening to the counsel of older men he is virtually giving up his independence or his reason. Much has been said about the so called despotic element in Methodism. One or two of the leading men have been called popes, but a close investigation would doubtless reveal the fact that those men are despotic only in the sense of insisting that Connexional principle shall not be sacrificed at any cost. It seems very natural we should revert to one name here, that of a man who has exercised considerable influence not only in the intellectual training of young preachers, but on the whole Church. He has had a large share in the movements of the Church.

As few, if any, possess so much power in the Wesleyan body we may be permitted to refer to Dr. Osborne in some detail. A man of great energy of character, with a force of will not given to many, he early made himself felt in the Conference. He had much to do with the agitators of other days, and received from them some sound abuse in consequence of the action he took in bringing them to justice. A brief portrait of him was given in the celebrated gallery painted by Wesleyan Academicians in the *Takings*. Those who took this portrait for a correct representation were certain to be prejudiced against him. He was drawn in no favourable light, and what good was said of him only made the picture the more unsatisfactory, for it amounted simply to damning him with faint praise. He was said to be thrust into power in a most questionable way, was declared to be "impolitic," "foolish," and "profane." A great many evils were laid at his door, while his pulpit ministrations were caricatured with all the genius embodied in the brush of the most celebrated of the Academicians. Finally he was declared to have "lost caste, to have lowered in the esteem of the public in proportion as he had risen by the forced, unmerited and untimely efforts of his friends."

The prophecies set forth in portrait 188 of the great gallery would scarcely appear to have been accurate, for in 1879 he stands on a pinnacle of power, and not a power upon sufferance, but evidently based upon the esteem of the Wesleyan body. He has not only been "elevated to the Conference platform," but he has been raised to the dignity of the Conference Presidential

Chair. For many years he has held in his hand a vast amount of influence, and he would seem to have used it wisely, for as he advances in years he grows in respect. Old men and young men alike esteem him, and he now holds a high position as theological tutor at one of the colleges.

As we read the account given of him in sketch 188 already referred to, we made it our business to watch the career of this extraordinary man, just to see how far the sketch was accurate. We find, as a general rule, that if a man gains and keeps such power as that invested in Dr. Osborne there must be some reason for it. There must be some excellences of character at work. What then is the secret of this man's dominant influence, an influence said to be strong enough to turn the vote of the Conference. Apart from his intellectual character, we think that his devotion to the Methodist economy, the absolute and rigid regard he has for Wesleyan rule and doctrine, must be set down as one of the sources of his power. Dr. Osborn is a Methodist in the very centre of his spiritual system. And yet we have never thought that his devotion to the ecclesiastical system of his choice savours in the least degree of bigotry or the intolerance that one hates in some natures. He was called a policeman in former days. The epithet was meant to be derogatory, but we are not sure that spiritual policemen are not needed in these days in every Church. Remove the word policeman and substitute guardian, and you get a fairer idea of the man. His services to his Church have been unquestionably great.

We pass to other aspects of Dr. Osborn's cha-

racter. See him in the pulpit. Does he here give you the idea of a brow-beater, a tyrant, or a policeman? Let any man listen to him who knows nothing of the wicked gossip of other days. Give him hearers who know nothing of his power on the Conference platform, eliminate all knowledge of his ecclesiastical history, and then estimate the man. We are not anxious in the least degree to shut out his Connexional history, but it is so mixed up in some people's minds with misrepresentation and prejudice, that we say put that history out of the question for a time, in order to obliterate all false preconceived opinion; for then we strip our minds, and view him fairly in the pulpit. If what we have suggested be done, we feel certain that Dr. Osborn will turn out to be a very different man from what many expect.

Let us therefore look at him in the pulpit. In the first place, you are struck with his unassuming character. He is as modest as a young itinerant preaching his first sermon. His emotions are as free and full as when he first entered the work; he is not sophisticated, nor is he pedantic, though few men in England carry more theological reading in their brain. Those who have heard of him by the ear expect to get a sermon on the false speculation of the age, or a rhetorical manifesto on French scepticism and German rationalism, or some purely intellectual disquisitions on the difference between Arminianism and Calvinism. But it is not so. Instead of these things, you will get finely-digested religious truth put before you with a simplicity full of charm, and the whole crowned with apt, fervent, and always

appropriate quotation from Charles Wesley's hymns. For him Charles Wesley is the best of all sacred poets, and we agree with him. Add to this the prevailing unction always present, and you need not wonder if he infuses spiritual glow and animation wherever he goes. We look upon him as a useful servant in the public sphere, a simple yet a great man in the pulpit, and, taken altogether, his character is perhaps the most remarkable of any Wesleyan minister of recent days. His purely intellectual character is of a high order, and in this respect he adorns the communion of his choice.

A glance through the Conference shews us many figures that maintain the reputation of the body in respect to intellectual vigour. The conditions under which the Methodists are working are likely to strengthen this quality. The theological institutions are affording an enlarged means of training students. These will no doubt be perfected more and more, possibly still further enlarged. Any prejudice that may exist against them will probably disappear, and there are not wanting signs to shew us that the laymen of Methodism are becoming increasingly anxious that the ministry shall not only be equal to any other as regards its zeal and earnestness, but that it shall hold its ground also in respect to its sound intellectual character.

CHAPTER IV.

RELATION TO DOCTRINE AND MODERN THOUGHT.

IT now amounts almost to a common-place to observe that the times are full of change and far-piercing results. The incessant intellectual activity of our age gives cause for alarm in many quarters. It can scarcely be doubted that a great deal of fear has been manifested on this subject. No doubt there is ground for watchfulness, and the mental fledgling has to be guarded against the stream that might carry him away. The Churches cannot be too vigilant in their attention to the tumultuous controversies arising out of a supposed antagonism between religion and science. At no time perhaps in the whole history of the world have young men been in greater danger of wrecking faith. Much of the religious literature of the time is subtly dangerous. It has the sentiment that wins the heart, but the intellectual currents make for unrest and unhinging of the mind. It is more pernicious for what it suggests than for what it states. Open declarations of astounding tenets would be less dangerous than the mixture of sentiment with half beliefs or negative deductions, and captivating inferences, that make an impression on the heart ere the mind has viewed them steadily on all sides.

Under these circumstances *doctrine* is put in the crucible ; but because there is a shaking for the time, an apparent impossibility of reconciling Christian dogma with scientific postulates, we need not sink in despair. The first effect of the seeming collision between dogma and science is either a rush from religion altogether or a disposition to throw ridicule on the labours of a band of men whom in the exercise of charity we are bound to regard as truth seekers. Hasty and imperfect generalisation is no less the fault of the one side than the other. Let it be understood that we are here speaking of the weightiest of our scientific writers, and not the general and miscellaneous band who, having caught a few scientific postulates, hasten to overturn religious dogma.

We think we see a better day dawning. There is a disposition shewn among some of our greatest thinkers to examine religious dogma with a less prejudiced mind. It is gratifying moreover to find that here and there an assumption may be seen which amounts to this, that the day may—we almost wrote will—come when there shall be no conflict between the intellectual and spiritual forces of the world, but mutual recognition on all hands. One of the greatest writers of our century—one who may be reckoned a truth seeker on a tremendous scale—in touching upon this controversy in a remarkable work says, "Happily the times display an increasing catholicity of feeling which we shall do well in carrying out as far as our natures permit. In proportion as we love truth more and victory less, we shall become anxious to know what it is which leads our opponents to think as they do. We shall begin to suspect that the pertinacity

of belief exhibited by them must result from a perception of something we have not perceived, and we shall aim to supplement the portion of truth we have found with the portion found by them. Making a more rational estimate of human authority we shall avoid alike the extremes of undue submission and undue rebellion, shall not regard some men's judgments as wholly good and others as wholly bad, but shall rather lean to the more defensible position that none are completely right and none are completely wrong."*

The hope here expressed is one that will probably be realised in the after time, but meanwhile we have to take note of the fact that modern scientific investigation has largely affected religious doctrine. All the churches of this country have been influenced more or less. But our special inquiry here relates to the Body originated by John Wesley, and which has grown to be a large spiritual force both in England and in other parts of the world. Anything affecting the doctrine and the principles of this Church must be of importance, and we wish to pursue the subject for a moment with as calm a mind as we can assume towards a matter lying in the sphere of difficulty.

It is not easy to hazard statements respecting the precise beliefs of this or that Church, at least it is not easy to point out the exact difference between one Church and another, or to sum up the extent of the defection from the doctrinal line. It may be a safe proposition to assert that there is more heresy in the English Church than in the shoot from it which has grown to such proportions that it threatens to become

* Spencer's *First Principles*, p. 23.

as large as the parent stem. But in fairness of argument it has to be pointed out first of all that where greater latitude of thought is allowed, and a corresponding latitude of expression, it follows with almost axiomatic rigidity that the heresy will be more conspicuous. We will lose nothing by admitting this, as we shall presently see. Meanwhile it follows as a corollary from what we have said that there may exist in a Church, which exercises a vigilant care over its dogmas, certain heretical tendencies which are not expressed. No thinking man in this age can keep absolutely aside from all difficulties arising from the relations existing (as some minds view them) between reason and faith, between spiritual beliefs on the one hand and Rationalism on the other. So there may be working quietly in a Church an amount of heresy unperceived and unexpressed. And we believe that this is the case in some Churches in England.

Now we reach the point of our inquiry. What is the relation of Methodism to doctrine or dogma? Has it left the old path? Is it in sympathy with well known movements in other denominations? Does it hold tenaciously to the Divinity of Christ, to the Inspiration of the Scriptures, and to Eternal Punishment? It is around these that the fierce controversies of our time play. So far as we have opportunity of sifting these questions, the answer is that on the whole Methodism is more steady to doctrine than any other Church in this country. There may be defections here and there, but if so we hear but little of them, and they cannot be of great importance. At all events we are certain that the Wesleyan Conference is sound to the core. It has not shown, as far as we have been

able to judge, the slightest inclination to give up the rigid hold which it seeks to maintain over the preachers in respect to the body of doctrine handed over to them by their founder. We gather this from almost every Conference address, from the official discourses of the leading men, and from thousands of sermons and addresses delivered every year through the country. It is also seen in the literature that comes from the Conference office.

Let us glance at some of the divines holding influential positions in the Body, and see what they have to say on the subject. Dr. Pope's name suggests itself to us at once, and we remark parenthetically that a degree was honoured here. The recognition from the University of Edinburgh was well deserved, and a great many men outside the sphere of religious life in which Dr. Pope moves, rejoiced at the honour. We believe that few divines in this country have an equal acquaintance with German theological literature, and there can be no doubt that the ex-President has exercised considerable influence on young men studying for the ministry. They know his immense acquirements in the theological field, and they are conversant with his sound critical spirit. Personal contact with him, too, adds to the respect with which his character, no less than his great abilities, is held. He may be taken to represent the thought of the Body in its higher aspects. What then does he say respecting the value of holding fast to sound doctrine? In a singularly able letter to the young ministers we read :—"You are most solemnly pledged to maintain a system of truth, which, in our estimation is no other than the faith once delivered to

the saints. Your fidelity is guarded in two special ways; on the one hand by certain formularies or standards to which you have given your adhesion; and on the other by the living authority of the Conference, which protects those standards and interprets them. You have reason to be thankful in these days of dissolving confessions and shifting views and desperate reconciliations that Providence has brought you under the bondage of a definite creed, the only peculiarity of which is its emphasis upon one or two of the grandest privileges of the gospel. You have in my judgment equal reason to be thankful that so many jealous eyes concentrate their watch on your faithfulness. Though to say so may seem an outrage on present public opinion, it is no small advantage to the cause of truth in Great Britain, and therefore in Christendom, that there is such a body as the Methodist Conference, with its living spirit faithful to its ancient traditions: as keen to detect as it is strong to suppress any serious deviation from its standard of orthodoxy in all who are subject to its authority. I am not speaking to the public: I only desire to encourage you to glory in your bonds. You have abundant scope for the free play of personal opinion. The strictness of our confession of faith is not to be denied; but it allows much more latitude in subordinate subjects than is sometimes supposed . . . You do well to rejoice that God has placed you in a brotherhood which is not surpassed in the Church of Christ for its sensitive fidelity to the cause of truth as truth is in Jesus."*

This puts the matter plainly and honestly, and the declaration may virtually be taken as the voice of the

* *Sermons, Addresses and Charges*, p. 384.

Conference. At all events, it is certain that the Conference would not hesitate to give its adhesion to such a declaration. We are not aware that there is a member of the legal hundred who would take exception to Dr. Pope's language. We may therefore take it that the Methodist body, as represented by the Conference is sound in relation to religious doctrine or dogma. Still more, we may say with all safety, that there is no other Church in this country more faithful to the doctrinal principles handed down to it. Look for a moment at the state of the other denominations. There is a Broad Church party in the Scotch establishment, represented by such men as the late Dr. Lee, Dr. Norman, McLeod, and by living authorities like Principal Tulloch and Dr. Wallace. Compare the following passage from the latter writer with the quotation from Dr. Pope, and see the difference as respects the attachment of the two divines to doctrine. Dr. Wallace once represented a powerful party in the north. Dr. Pope, it will be conceded, represents a powerful portion of the Wesleyan Church. "The true policy of Church preservation," says Dr. Wallace, "lies in widening its doctrinal basis as the times permit. This alone will conciliate the intelligence of the country (which ultimately leads it) by assimilating the form of the Church to the one type of religious establishment which is defensible in such a constitution of society as our own. Here, too, the path of policy is the path of duty. If the religious thought of the country is moving towards a new point of view the Church must go there also to meet it, if it means to be instrumental in impressing a living faith within the mind of the nation. To promote such a reform seems the

natural work of the liberal party in the Church, and its leaders cannot address themselves to it too earnestly or too soon. They may fail in perpetuating any kind of religious establishment, but no one else is more likely to succeed. In the worst issue they will have done their duty, and will have contributed certain preparations essential for securing the allegiance of the future to piety and truth."*

The spirit which animates this passage is very different from that which is felt in the language of the *Didsbury Theological Tutor.* Passing on we may observe that the Free Church of Scotland is not free from the breath of serious heresy, as is sufficiently seen in Professor Smith's case, and was also noticeable some years ago in the case of Walter Smith, a man possessing a great deal of intellectual force and who has attained a considerable reputation as a poet. In the United Presbyterian Church, too, the theological waters have lately been ruffled by the breeze of heresy. But what shall we say when we come to look at the Church of England? Here it is no mere ruffling of the waters, but a continuous storm. In order to find out the alarming defections that exist here we have only to turn to the *Charges* of the late Bishop Thirlwall. No one can accuse the Bishop of St. David's of exaggerated view. His was the most judicial mind in the English Church during his own time, and he has not been surpassed since. Not only was he the most accomplished master of ancient and modern scholarship, but he possessed powers which ranked him amongst the greatest of ecclesiastical statesmen. He was intimately conversant, not simply with the highways of every

* *Recess Studies*, p. 239.

religious controversy, but with its bye-ways also. He had the clearest as well as the most comprehensive vision. He had, too, the rare gift of lucid and exact expression. Johnson said that those who want to cultivate a good style must give their days and nights to Addison. Similarly we may say that those who want to obtain a type of composition which combines strength with clear utterance on ecclesiastical affairs, must give their days and nights to Thirlwall. What then is the picture he give us of the Established Church? It is true that he speaks often hopefully of the future, but his hope reminds us of streaks of sunlight, not the blaze of noonday splendour. In his singularly able *Charges* we find he is obliged to pass in review numerous movements that have a sad significance. He has to discuss the well known *Essays and Reviews*, the writings of the Bishop of Natal, the Eucharistic controversy, Ritualism, and dissensions in the Church. These embrace collateral questions, many of them of the first importance as respects their effects on the Establishment. He says "Whatever we may think of the past, I am afraid that no one, who does not shut his eyes to facts of the most glaring notoriety can deny that the present state of the Church with regard to the influence which she exercises on the people of this country is far from satisfactory." Speaking of Ritualism he remarks that "The movement has by no means reached its term. It is still in the full vigour of its early years. It appears to be advancing both extensively in the work of proselytism, and intensively in doctrinal innovation; not always distinctively enunciated, but clearly intimated. Its partisans seem to vie with

one another in the introduction of more and more startling novelties both of theory and practice. The adoration of the consecrated wafer, reserved for that purpose, which is one of the most characteristic Romish rites and a legitimate consequence of the Romish Eucharistic doctrine, if it has not been already adopted in some of our Churches, and the Romish Festival of the *Corpus Christi*, instituted for the more conspicuous exercise of that adoration, has, it appears, actually begun to be observed by clergymen of our Church. Already public honours are paid to the Virgin Mary, and language applied to her which can only be considered as marking the first stage of a development to which no limit, short of the full Romish worship, can be probably assigned."* Elsewhere in the same work Bishop Thirlwall says "Our danger is that which threatens us from within. It is not Disestablishment or Disendowment, but Disruption, Disorganisation, and Disintregation that we have immediately to dread; with the certainty that the evil which is incomparably greater in itself, would, if unchecked, sooner or later draw the other after it. It is fit that we should look it calmly in the face, that we may neither underrate nor unduly magnify its importance. But no one who is not blind to the signs of the times can question that it affords matter for serious apprehension."

Have things changed for the better since the Bishop of St. David's died? On the contrary, it is to be feared they have grown worse, for we can scarcely take up a daily paper without seeing some allusions to these bitter controversies. Mr. Mackonnochie's case

* *Charges*, p. 169.

disclosed the singular position of the English Church in respect to its hold, or rather lack of hold, upon dangerous or objectionable practices ; and the recent appearance of the Bishop of Oxford in court exhibited a new phase of the difficulties by which the Establishment is beset. No one can predict where these evils will end.

In numerous other forms the unrest that presages disaster, either permanent or temporary, manifests itself. There is undoubtedly a wide latitude allowed to many spiritual teachers in the English Church. A section of them are actively engaged in the advocacy of a fold that would admit "all sorts and conditions of men." The consummation of freedom which they wish it is impossible to attain, but the attempt to reach it involves mischievous results. Mr. Haweis is not the ablest of the Broad Church party, but he has exerted an influence in the metropolis perhaps wider than many imagine. The cry after liberty of thought is a taking one, especially with young men and young women just emerging into the region of independent thinking, but who have not learned the rare lesson of knowing that religious thought imposes limits. A Church on Mr. Haweis' plan can never be anything but a huge scheme of anarchy with no elements to hold it together. The essential danger involved in the teaching of such men is not that their ultimate object will be attained, but that the half trained mind will be driven away from the Church altogether. It is not perhaps too much to say, that the instruction received from such apostles in many cases paves the way for the introduction into the school of Mr. Bradlaugh. Worst of

all, the spiritual element is almost wholly eliminated. The contention for pure intellectual freedom, so persistently enforced, is generally uttered without regard to that which must touch the heart in its deeper aspects. The great Church of Christ was not founded to solve the mysterious problems relating to the mental life of man, but to unravel the profounder enigmas of pain, sorrow and disaster. Yet this, which is the leading essential of Christianity, is in danger of being banished from a good deal of the teaching that wins favour in our day. It is a mistake surely to make the Church perform the same functions as the *Nineteenth Century*, the *Contemporary*, or the *Fortnightly Review*. But this is precisely what many ministers are doing, or attempting to do. An acute observer cannot fail to notice, whilst he walks through the streets of London, placards posted on dead walls announcing sermons on all kinds of subjects, ranging from the political movements of the time, and free thought, to Shakespeare and the political disabilities of women. If a collection of these subjects were made, the list would be a most curious one. But we have said sufficient to show in what direction a section of pulpit teachers are running. This feature is not to be seen only in the English Church ; there are other denominations marching more or less in the same path.

We have a great respect for the Congregationalist body. Some of their divines stand in the front rank of thinking men. A few of them are abreast of every political, theological, scientific and intellectual movement of the age. They are asked to contribute to the highest class reviews ; they write books that merit attention far beyond the pale of their own Church ;

and many of them preach with a mixture of earnestness and thought that makes for spiritual uplifting; whilst in some notable instances good service has been rendered to movements of national justice and public philanthropy. But these very excellences seem to have brought with them dangers. The glow of freedom in which they rejoice, the advances which have been made, the acquirements accumulated, have led some of them into grooves that are not the best for enabling them to discharge their higher functions as spiritual teachers of men. Amongst the Congregationalists, there has been seen in recent years a strong desire to enter the field where there is little else but dialectical skill shown. The result has been that in some of their pulpits the gospel, as we know it, has been almost entirely banished. Prelections on history, parallels between one period of history and another, criticisms upon Fuerbach, Herbert Spencer, John Stuart Mill, Frederic Harrison, with remote allusions to German and French writers on philosophy and physiology— this is the spiritual food served in some important London churches. As far as we know the contagion has not reached any Methodist pulpit; and it will be an unfortunate day when it is necessary to reply in City-road chapel, or Great Queen-street chapel to the materialistic conclusions of Tyndall, as tabulated at Birmingham, or the address of M. Renan, on taking the chair in the French Academy.

It seems to be a pressing concern in many quarters as to the best way of meeting the modern spirit. The rationalising spirit of the age, or liberalism in religion, which landed Newman in Rome, is a source of unmitigated trouble to numerous preachers; and

recent scientific discoveries, widening the breach between the Church and the *savants*, have disturbed theological repose. The first effect of this has been to draw away a portion of ministerial energy from its proper and legitimate work. This subject is comprehensively treated in an able, but in our view, incomplete article in a quarterly organ recently. The writer says—

"Unable to offer an uncompromising resistance to the tendency of modern thought, unable also to surrender at discretion our traditional faith, our course is clearly marked out for us by the circumstances of the case. There is a middle way, a golden path open to us, which we may enter wisely, which sooner or later we must, enter upon. Already adventurous feet are here and there treading this path with more or less success. It is no short and easy road, but it is one which an imperative necessity calls us to take, and if it is not without peril, it is also bright with promise and hope. It may be briefly characterised, and it is this : to recognise and examine fairly and frankly the theological scepticism and unrest of our times, to endeavour earnestly to gauge the divergent forces by which men's minds are moved, and thoroughly to master the chief features of the disturbing influences at work, estimating their real import and bearing upon religious truth ; it is, in short, calmly and fearlessly to walk up to this modern spirit and look it fully in the face, to hold high converse with it, and subject it to respectful cross-questioning, in order by patient and earnest inquiry to ascertain its demands, and interpret its real significance for Christian theology.

> We do it wrong, being so majestical,
> To offer it the show of violence,
> For it is as the air invulnerable,
> And our vain blows malicious mockery.

Taking this wiser course, alarm will vanish, anxiety will subside, old and cherished beliefs will be received back as from the dead, and the mind will settle down to a faith that no scepticism can disturb and no panic fears shake."*

This is so far wise, but we fail to find in this article that emphasis upon the spiritual element we so much desire. No attacks upon the modern spirit will be complete unless a constant study of practical religion is urged. Now we think that it is just here that the Wesleyans demonstrate their capacity to understand what will really prove effective as an antidote against the spreading waves of infidelity, or the disposition to relegate religious truth to the sphere of the unknowable. Almost all the men of mark in our denomination during the last twenty-five years—when the "modern spirit" may be said to have advanced steadily—have taken frequent opportunity of endeavouring to throw the people back upon their religious convictions, upon their own self conscious spirits, with reference to the leading facts of religious life.

They appear to reciprocate the view set forth in a passage written by a man whose works are not so generally known as they used to be, the late Sir James Stephen, a contributor to the *Edinburgh Review*. He says: "Let not those who boast themselves in logic, Aristotelian or Baconian, assume that

* *British Quarterly Review*, April 1879.

their puny architecture of syllogistic or inductive reasoning affords the rules by which the soul, rescued from the hindrances of a carnal corporiety, erects for herself edifices of knowledge, immovable in their base, beautiful in their proportions, and towering in splendid domes and pinnacles to the skies. To Newton and to Pascal the theories of the vulgar geometry were as instinctively obvious as the preliminary axioms on which they rest. While yet an infant, Mozart was possessed of all those complex harmonies which a life of patient study scarcely reveals to inferior masters of his art. In my planetary existence I had rejoiced in my habitual aptitude for physiology and historical researches, nor had I regretted the years of ceaseless toil devoted to them. But now I discovered that in myself, as in the great men I have mentioned, the apprehensiveness of truth had depended far more on the animal than the mental framework. Quick and vigorous in high bodily health, but sluggish and inert under the pressure of corporeal debility, I learned that logic, experiment, and calculation had been but so many crutches to assist the movements of the halt and feeble, and that with a physical instrumentality, which study could not exhaust nor disease assail, intuition took the place of reasoning. I became rather the conscious witness than the agent of the process, by which consequences were evolved from the premises brought under my notice."*

Take the whole of the Legal Hundred for example. Let us ask ourselves what countenance has been given to the assumptions of the "modern spirit"

* Stephen's *Ecclesiastical Biography*, p. 616.

by any one of these representative men. Do these men, in their collective capacity, not maintain the distinctive dogmas handed over to them? The question is almost superfluous. But there is a more important inquiry perhaps, and we shall not shrink from instituting it. Do these men, in their individual capacity, in the wide spheres of influence given to them, not also bear record to the evangelical character of the community of which they form a part? If we were to take one hundred representative men from any other Church, could we shew a stronger phalanx? The men have all special features. They have a distinctive character, they do not all project themselves before the world as leaders of thought or opinion, but in their several grooves, they move professedly upholding doctrines that they believe require no modification or trimming. So far as we are aware, few, if any one of them, disclose a disposition towards compromise in the formulas handed over by Wesley.

Yet it has to be noted that some of these men occupy influential positions in relation to the world lying beyond Methodist doctrine. If we take the first name on the official list of the Legal Conference, we come across a man who is known far beyond his own denomination. Dr. Rigg gains and merits the respect of statesmen having to do with the solution of problems bearing on the maintenance of religious truth. He has exhibited the marks of a statesman himself, and has done no inconsiderable service in the literary field. His *Modern Anglican Theology* is known to students who watch current aspects of thought. In these literary studies, as well as in *The*

Churchmanship of John Wesley, he has vindicated the true mission of Methodism. But in addition to this, his pulpit teaching is healthful and energetic. To a chaste spirit he adds an unusually impressive though a quiet voice. We claim that the man occupying the highest official position in the Conference represents the best form of evangelical thought. Can this be said of all neighbouring bodies? A like remark may be made of such ex-presidents as Dr. Jobson, William Arthur, John Rattenbury, Dr. Osborn, Dr. James, Gervase Smith. In John Farrar, scholarship, exact and full, is united with steadiness to doctrine. This combination too may be found in Dr. Appelbe, in Dr. Moulton, in John Dury Geden, in Dr. Andrew Kessen, in Dr. Pope, in Benjamin Hellier and in Benjamin Gregory. Ebenezer Jenkins has by his writings won a reputation of a similar kind, and Dr. Punshon has never been suspected of heresy. Some have said that he is declining in pulpit power, but we cannot admit it. We have detected in him a new vein, which may yet work wonders. There are riches in him still. His preaching was always heart searching, but maturity and vicissitude are giving him a profound grasp of the wonderful workings of spiritual life, and we hope for still greater results. It may be said of him that his steadiness to Methodist doctrine is as conspicuous as his eloquence.

There are other men in the Conference worthy of notice here. Who does not see in Thomas McCullagh, in Samuel Coley, in Daniel Sanderson, in John Walton, in Charles Garrett, in Joseph Bush, in John Kilner the elements that formed the back-bone and life of the earlier men? Mr. McCullagh, in his

life of Owen Keysell, Mr. Coley in his biography of Thomas Collins, and Mr. Arthur in his life of Gideon Ousley, have each set forth the distinctive merits of zeal and earnestness in the ministry, combined with sound adhesion to doctrine, virtually placing these above mere abstract speculation.

But it is gratifying at the same time to observe that there are a great number of younger men in the Body, who, setting aside all disposition to adopt the spirit of the age in relation to the introduction of speculative topics into the pulpit, have set themselves with vigour to maintain the old doctrinal position. This feature is noticeable in such men as George Stringer Rowe, William Maltby, Josiah Banham, Henry Burton, B.A., James Chalmers, M.A., James Earnest Clapham, T. T. Short, Willam Hurst, W. Milburn Briggs, Charles H. Kelly, Jabez Marrat, Joseph Smithies, Geo. O. Bate, Theophilus Woolmer, Henry J. Pope, Levi Waterhouse, William Jessop, John S. Workman, J. Lancaster Ball, Thomas Hardy, Joseph Hargreaves, John Clulow.

It need hardly be added that we are not contending that these men are all wise or perfect in their varied spheres. We simply maintain that they demonstrate that the Wesleyan community is faithful to doctrine allied to zeal. We shall not regret to see their efforts doubled, their energies recruited, from every available source. There is more need than ever for Methodist teaching, more need for the old fire. The ministry, with all its excellences, is not without its dangers. The rush of a manifold life, beating heavily around, is interpenetrated with influences that will chill their

ardour if not carefully watched. The warning given by the President, Dr. Rigg, at Freemasons' Tavern near the end of last year we would re-echo. On that occasion he said :—

"Are we, with all our superiority to-day in other respects, as Methodistic as we used to be? Have we as much of the proper spirit and strength as our fathers had? The High Church has learnt many of our lessons as to revivalistic zeal and organisation, as to prayer-meetings and pastoral work ; it has amalgamated with its special doctrines and aims not a little of our methods and spirit. Have we, the while, been declining from our early spirit and energy, our primitive methods and manners. While the High Church has become Methodistical in many of its ways, have we become, or are we in danger of becoming, formal and Churchy in some things, formal and Congregationalistic in others? In particular, are we in any respect or in any measure losing our connexional spirit or connexional unity and zeal and *esprit de corps*, and becoming Congregationalised ; that is, narrow and local in our cares and sympathies? I fear there is some danger of this."

It will be noticed that the highest official authority complains in this passage, not of heresy or a tendency to heresy, but of the danger of falling into spiritual inactivity or lassitude. No doubt warnings are needed, but there does not seem to be any wave of heresy rising in the Connexion. The Wesleyans have no sympathy with the new religion developed under Comte. Their principal monthly periodical has lately been witness to a series of articles antagonistic to the new doctrines that find favour with both rich

and learned. The author recently had an opportunity of addressing a London audience, and on this occasion we were glad to recognise a man of force. Mr. W. L. Watkinson, we need hardly say, is the man in question. Mr. Gregory has in him a valuable ally. For it is well not only that the pulpits should be efficiently filled, but that some of the men should battle in other regions with the current of modern thought in its subtler aspects. A series of well-written papers on the subject mentioned, is an exceedingly useful service to the more intelligent members of the Church. People are more apt to be carried away by half truths, than any full exposition of a system that can never commend itself, for a single day, to the followers of Wesley. To guard people against impending danger is a great service, no less in the intellectual than in the physical world.

A few more words on the subject of "Positivism" may not be out of place in this chapter. It does not come within our range to criticise in detail the principles laid down, with so much ingenuity and philosophical ability, by the great Augustus Comte. We need not follow him through the three intellectual stages, or the law that is involved in them. Our legitimate inquiry is neither so comprehensive nor so difficult. We simply seek to know whether this wonderful system originated by Comte, and which has undoubtedly secured some remarkable adherents, has taken any great hold of the mind of the modern Church. Nay, our investigation is even more limited than that. Our question resolves itself thus. Have the Wesleyans any sympathy with the religion of humanity, or are they likely to have any in the fu-

ture? Is there any disposition, amongst even a small section, to embrace the religion involved in the laws of phenomena as set forth by Comte? The question is one not difficult to answer, at all events as respects the weightier men in the older and in the younger ranks of the ministry. How ridiculous it would be to think of this religion being accepted, in any shape or form, by such men as Dr. Pope, Dr. Rigg, Dr. James, Dr. Osborn, Dr. Jobson, Benjamin Gregory, Dr. Punshon, William Arthur, John Farrar, John Bedford, or any one on the list of the Legal Hundred. These men know that Methodism, without the great Divine personality that walked this earth, would be shorn of its essential glory. No Church gives more prominence to the life of Christ, as it was manifested among the hills of Judæa, than the Wesleyan Church. The living Saviour was the beginning and end of Wesley's power. It is the foundation of Charles Wesley's magnificent hymns. The whole tendency of John's preaching, and Charles's poetry, is to impress upon us the real life that was and is. When they thought of the Deity, it was that Deity, clothed in human form, that they saw in the manger, on the floor of the temple, on the Sea of Galilee, and on the cross. The historical Christ is always before the Wesleyan Church—in the class meeting, in the love-feast, in the Sabbath services, in the prayer meeting, and in the closet, with its profound secrets of self-communion and self-surrender.

An apostle of another persuasion has spoken powerfully against the religion of abstraction. In speaking on the ideal substitutes for God Mr. Martineau, with whom we do not agree in all things, awoke some

enthusiasm at Manchester New College on a recent occasion. It is seldom that James Martineau goes into the sarcastic or ironical vein, and if he does it is entered with the most complete unconsciousness. No man has less desire to raise a smile or a laugh. He never works upon the weakness of an audience for the sake of gaining the temporary approval manifested in the turbulent and loud laugh. But there was irony and serious thought splendidly combined in the following passage :—"We have only to substitute for the familiar terms of personal piety, which speak of 'God' and the human 'soul' any of their supposed modern equivalents, and then estimate the gain or the loss. Will then the Benedicite swell with the same tones of joy when it has to sing : 'Bless the Eternal Law, all ye its works ; bless the Eternal Law, O my synthesis of organs ?' Will the contrition which now cries : 'Blot out my transgressions,' 'Cast me not away,' 'A broken heart thou dost not despise,' pour out its sorrows to a deaf ideal, and shed its passionate tears on an abstraction that cannot wipe them away ? Will any moonlit form be seen kneeling in our Gethsemanes, and rising from prostrate anguish to sublime repose through the prayer, 'O thou *Eternal, not ourselves that makest for righteousness*, if it be possible let this cup pass from me, nevertheless not as I will but as Thou wilt ?' Will any crucified one lose the bitterness of death in crying : 'O stream of tendency, into thy hands I commit my spirit ?' And to the martyr stoned to death, will any Heaven open and any vision come, when he exclaims : '*Great Ensemble of Humanity*, receive me ?' For my part, I cherish the hope that

our Unsatisfied Modern Thinker, after vain trial of such devotions may return to his rest, and say with a natural reversion of heart: 'O thou once Unknown, I thank Thee that though Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, Thou hast revealed them unto babes.'"*

It will be appropriate, in this chapter, to recognise in more detail the value of Charles Wesley's influence in relation to the great questions lying in the sphere of doctrine. Men whose piety would have withered and died, have been often sustained by this sweet singer. Should the sermon fall flat, should it lack the unction that imparts freshened spiritual energy, the hymns of Charles Wesley are ever ready to meet the wants of the panting spirit. They are in every sense practical and full. There is not an aspiration in the human soul, that cannot find ample expression in the language of Charles Wesley. All experience is embodied in this poet. If one never heard a sermon at all, or happened to be away from the converse of books, or away from all human society, enough would be found in that one hymn that lingers with us the most stable of all our spiritual memories:

> Jesu, lover of my soul,
> Let me to thy bosom fly,
> While the nearer waters roll,
> While the tempest still is high.

This hymn, and Toplady's "Rock of Ages" are like two angelic voices for ever embodying in celestial music the breathings of saints and sinners alike. We can hardly exaggerate the immense services rendered by Charles Wesley to the vital life of the Connexion originated by his brother John. And the influence

* *Ideal Substitutes for God*, p. 30.

those services have exerted on pure doctrine is not the least part of the inheritance bequeathed by the poet.

Here we desire to recognise the labours of Mr. Christophers in Methodist hymnology. He has devoted great attention to the subject, and has produced two books that are worthy the perusal of all intelligent Wesleyans. We mean *The Poets of Methodism*, and *The New Methodist Hymn Book and its Writers*. Both are careful works, containing a vast amount of interesting information presented in a very readable form. Indeed, we have found in these books some truly eloquent writing. The critical remarks are judicious and discriminating, and the author possesses a calm judgment in the midst of a passion for his task. These books are as interesting as many novels, and far more useful and instructive.

We are glad to observe that Mr. Christophers has marked the influence of Charles Wesley on the doctrinal teaching of the Church. He says "Methodism owes it to him that its distinctive teachings are so embodied in the psalmody, which the masses of its generations have formed the habit of singing, that it has been preserved in doctrinal integrity, while some other communities have been tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine. For instance, the doctrine of the Holy Spirit's witness with the spirit of believers, that they are the children of God, is so wrought into the very life of the Methodist's hymnology, that their service of song has been an agreeable preservative from indistinct notions, mistiness of experience, and doubtful gloom . . . . . Nothing but clearly defined spiritual life, and certain

joyfulness in God, could be expected in the experience of people whom Charles Wesley taught to sing of salvation."*

It is impossible to pass from the name of Charles Wesley without mentioning "Wrestling Jacob."

> Come, O thou traveller unknown,
> Whom still I hold, but cannot see.

To speak of Charles Wesley, without alluding to this hymn, would be like visiting London without looking at the great cathedral of St. Paul, or travelling on the Rhine without viewing the noble structure at Cologne, or casting a glance towards the fortress of Ehrenbreitstein which frowns upon the waters of the Moselle. Dr. John Stoughton has paid a fine tribute to the poetry of Charles Wesley in a work recently published. He says:

"The history of Methodist hymnology, shows any one who reads it, what a mighty inspiration it was to the body at the beginning, and has been ever since. Strains full of life became familiar to the members as household words, and were sung in the little chapel, on the hill side, amidst the crowded street, by the ingle nook of the cottager, by the bedside of the dying, in the funeral procession, and on the brink of the grave. Perhaps no other Church has ever lived, and moved, and had its being, in such an atmosphere of Sacred Song." †

We may conclude these observations by declaring that as respects doctrine or dogma the Church is sound. An able article in the *Quarterly Review* says, "Only let critical researches into the origin and

* *Poets of Methodism*, pp. 115—117.

† Stoughton's *Religion in England*, vol. I., p. 412.

character of the sacred documents, be conducted on the principle which combines reverence for spiritual truth with freedom of intellectual inquiry, and we need neither have bitter recriminations between our divines, nor apprehensions for the faith, which is equally dear to all. It is, indeed, only through the combination of the open eye with the devout heart, that the highest truth can be obtained. But these, working harmoniously together, have the promise of the future, and will ever bear richer and richer fruits to the silencing of unbelief, the vindication of the Divine wisdom, and the building up of the Church of God in the more perfect knowledge of his Holy word."*

Both old and young men in the Connexion are manifesting a disposition to look at the great practical question of seeing that the national life is kept pure, whatever results may flow from the scientific spirit of the age. This is a wise and beneficent policy. All around us we find indications of the same view. It will probably obtain wider regard, for the Churches are coming to understand, more clearly than ever, that it is not in union of organisation that the redemption of the world is to be wrought out, not in the concentrated power of a hundred creeds, not in the amalgamation or fusion of numberless dogmas, that have been a source of bitterness for ages, but in the devotion of each Christian communion, working earnestly in its own sphere, aiming at everything that will arouse the people from irreligion, indifference, and apathy, and set before them the one name that is above every name, and the charm of which is still all potent in the regeneration of the world.

* *Quarterly Review*, April 1879 ; p. 336.

CHAPTER V.

RELATION TO POLITICAL MOVEMENTS.

THE Wesleyan Church occupies a unique place amongst the other bodies in respect to the attitude it assumes towards political movements. Here it demonstrates how very keen a sense it has of its primary duties. It looks with a jealous eye upon anything that would mar its spiritual influence. "The present is an age of revolution," said the Rev. Thomas Jackson. "The disestablishment of the Church of Ireland may be fairly regarded as the forerunner of other impending changes, whether for good or evil time will only show. Amidst them all it is earnestly hoped that Methodism will retain, unimpaired, its original character, leaving secular politics to secular men: its ministers, guarding against a worldly spirit, will keep steadily in view their special calling, so emphatically expressed by the venerated founder of these societies: 'You have nothing to do but to save souls.' Methodism, as it was conducted by Mr. Wesley, stood aloof from strict churchmanship on the one hand and from systematic dissent on the other; and its true safety and success require that it shall never be identified with either. They would

alike divert it from its real object—the advancement of spiritual religion."*

Perhaps, under all the circumstances, this is still the true policy for the followers of John Wesley. Their original aim was to spread spiritual holiness, and though they have grown into a large Church, and become a great organization, there is still need in England for the same aggressive evangelical labour. If the state of the country is not so wretched to-day as it was when Wesley went into the highways and hedges, there are yet great evils to be confronted. The evils of our time do not wear the outwardly gross character of those of the 18th century, but there are real mischievous influences at work which require to be counteracted. It will be by no lukewarm service the Wesleyan preachers will maintain their aggressive character. If they change their point of view they will inaugurate a policy of compromise and disaster. The essential element of Wesley's labour was the persistent endeavour to convince the people of the paramount importance of practical religion. He almost wholly discarded speculation in his preaching, and in this respect he saw with a clear vision. No man of his time better understood the pressing wants of the age.

The question is sometimes asked, What position would a man like Wesley have taken up in these days? A careful study of the character of the Reformer of the 18th century, would undoubtedly lead us to believe that the attitude of his mind would in the main be the same. He would examine narrowly the inner working of the national life. If he failed to perceive, or if he could not find the outward gross-

* *Life and Times*, p. 511.

ness of his own age, he would penetrate the surface and endeavour to get at the under currents of life. If he did not find sin walking in the open street, he would set himself to inquire whether it did not exist in some other subtler form. The one question would be always before him: Is this a godly nation—is Scriptural holiness in the land? All the energies of his nature would be directed towards that inquiry.

Now there is a great deal in these times to afford matter for speculation to his followers. There are political movements of the most exciting nature. Everywhere there is agitation, and signs of coming change. No intellectual minister can be wholly indifferent to the rapidily thickening events around him. The strife of parties is loud, political feeling runs high. The whole order of society is disturbed. In such times, there is danger that the minds of ministers will be attracted from the special walk, which Wesley marked out, and in which we are persuaded his followers still desire to tread. The older men in the Connexion, at all events, will strive to keep the preachers close to their legitimate duties.

This is no place for an elaborate, or exhaustive discussion of the great question of the Disestablishment of the Church of England. We are not immediately concerned with the justice or the injustice of an agitation in the direction of the overthrow of the Establishment. But for our inquiry, it is necessary to admit that there is a powerful existing movement, whose main aim is to cut at the root of the English Church. It is not a feeble or a quixotic agitation. It is supported by many influential men. We are told that the Liberation Society gathers strength year

after year, and constantly adds to the numbers of its adherents. It is daily extending its ramifications. In more recent days it has received an impulse from current movements on the other side of the border, and there, we are informed, a large section of the people are ripe for the destructive work. In Scotland some weighty names have been added to those on the Liberation Society's list of membership or adherents. Mr. Edward Miall, Mr. Richard, Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, Mr. Dale, Mr. Guiness Rogers, and Mr. Carvell Williams have gained other associates. They are, too, making their way amongst another section of men, who act and re-act upon the educated classes of England. Mr. Frederic Harrison is an ally, and he spoke lately with much vigour from the platform of the Memorial Hall. These are indications of the direction in which opinion on this question is moving. Every year sees more enthusiasm at the Metropolitan Tabernacle, every year adds a fresh stream of tendency to the movement. Encouragement has been drawn, too, from the resolution of Mr. Gladstone to contest Midlothian. No disestablishment of a Church in these days is possible without him, and his determination to cross the border to confront "the bold Buccleuch," naturally aroused many speculations as to his ultimate intentions. Of course they can be little more than speculations, and it is very problematical whether the ex-Prime Minister contemplates any further legislation in the direction of Disestablishment either in England or Scotland. He has reiterated, over and over again, that it is by a practical, and not a theoretical, test that such questions must be settled. We are justified in inferring that he does not at

present consider a change necessary. But we remember how rapid was the advance of the public mind when the cry for the overthrow of the Irish Church arose. Meanwhile there is no immediate prospect of Disestablishment.

But as the discussions on such a subject continue to engage the public mind, it is not unnatural that young and enthusiastic politicians should enter the field. In the ranks of the Wesleyan preachers there are able men, some of them full of the vigour and enthusiasm of youth. They are irresistibly drawn to a study of these questions, and it has been asserted that a certain section would not mind lending themselves to an open agitation. If there is any foundation for the rumour, we are bound to say that, in our opinion, it would not receive any countenance from the older men, who have borne the burden and heat of the day, and to whom age and many active years of labour, have brought calm and dispassionate thought. It is not possible for the Wesleyan Church, as a body, to unite itself with the Liberation Society, unless the Establishment becomes wholly rotten with Popery and infidelity.

Explaining some letters he had written on the relations that exist between Methodism and the Church, Mr. Jackson said, "I stated that my respect for the Church of England, in its legal, orthodox, and Protestant character, was unaltered and unalterable; but if the evils complained of were allowed to spread unchecked, so that from the pulpits of the National Church the people should be taught to disbelieve the Bible, and to worship the consecrated elements of the Lord's Supper, it would be impossible to preserve a friendly

relation between the Church and John Wesley's sons in the gospel. For against Popery and scepticism, by whomsoever recommended and propagated, it is their duty to bear an earnest testimony, and warn their congregations, in every town, village and hamlet with all possible zeal and fidelity. With respect to the Church of England, which was constituted under the directions of the Reformers,—and with the exception of the reign of Queen Mary and the time of the Commonwealth, has continued for some three hundred years,—far be it from me to say either that its constitution is faultless, or that its administration has been always unexceptional; but with all its imperfections, defects and sins, it has supplied some of the most remarkable examples of sacred scholarship the world has ever seen; its general theological literature is richer than that of any other community; and on three momentous subjects it has rendered services of inestimable value and above all praise. So far as argument is concerned, its clergy have for ever annihilated the claims of Popery; they have exhibited the evidences of natural and revealed religion with unrivalled clearness and power; and they have most decisively vindicated, upon Scriptural grounds, the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, so as to have cast into the shade all that had been previously written on the same subject."*

The Wesleyan Conference, in regard to this subject, assumes a dignified course. It virtually seeks by every means to recognise the good that is in the English Church. It perceives that there are earnest men in the ranks of the clergy, that many of them are imbued

* *Recollections*, p. 453.

with the spirit of Wesley and Whitfield. The Methodists, as a body, are generous to the Communion out of which they sprung. The spirit of generosity pervades Dr. Rigg's book on *The Churchmanship of John Wesley*. The President of the Conference maintains, ably and conclusively that we cannot return to the Establishment, but his arguments are not founded on the assumption that the English Church is rotten and ready to perish. He believes it will be better for each to pursue its own course.

Wesleyan ministers may hold individual opinions in respect to the disestablishment crusade ; they may perhaps be justified in seeking in their own spheres to advance the movement, but it is certain they cannot drag the body to which they belong into an open attack upon the Church, which Wesley loved so well, and which a great many of his followers love too, though they highly disapprove of the practices of Ritualism, and the clamours of Broad Churchmen, for a creed that may be anything and everything. They have no sympathy with such apostles as Mr. Hugh R. Haweis or Mr. Mackonnochie. But they do not dislike men like Canon Farrar, or the Archbishop of York, the Bishop of Gloucester and Bristol, the late Dean Hook, Canon Liddon, Canon Westcott, Canon Fleming, and similar men.

The Liberation meetings at Mr. Spurgeon's Tabernacle have been remarkable for the absence of Wesleyan ministers. It is true that on a recent occasion a layman appeared, but his advocacy was not of the enthusiastic type, and he clearly felt himself embarrassed. On another occasion a minister spoke in a more exuberant style, but he did not represent any

great section of his brethren. He admitted, with commendable generosity, that the Church of England was like Noah's ark. There were some good things in it, but there were a great many wild beasts besides. The remark provoked a good deal of laughter, but it would not have provoked laughter in the Wesleyan Conference, or in any assembly of his brethren. We do not wish to lay too much stress upon this. We are not sure that the reverend gentleman had no right to identify himself with Mr. Richard, Mr. Chamberlain, and Mr. Guiness Rogers. We only desire to point out that he did not, as he admitted himself, represent the Wesleyan Conference. The subject is undoubtedly a most delicate one. We must respect the consciences of men, and if some of the preachers feel the National Church to be a great injustice, to be a corrupt institution, then it is difficult to see how, with right conceptions of freedom, they are to be deprived of expressing their opinions. But, a minister of the Wesleyan Connexion has to consider in what relation he stands to the body of men with whom he is identified officially. He is bound to act in concert with them on many questions, and the inquiry may be fairly put whether this is not one of them.

It is after all gratifying to know that there has not been noticeable any very widespread desire on the part of the younger men to get up a crusade against the English Church. There are many reasons for this. The great theological literature, which we have inherited from the English divines, the scholarly and thoughtful books, now issuing from the successors of these men, have tended to create a feeling of respect

and even veneration for the Establishment. Not even the gross persecution, to which Methodists have been subjected in the villages, at the hands of a section of the clergy, has been able to obliterate that veneration. Then they are not slow to recognise the high evangelical qualities that mark a portion of the men whom the Liberation Society would sever from the State. Add to this the fact that some of the best divines in the Establishment are on friendly terms with the Wesleyans, ever ready to acknowledge their earnest work, or the piety by which they are characterised. Dean Stanley is perpetually referring to the Wesleys, as examples of all that was noble and God-like. The hymns of Charles Wesley are a well of spring water to him, and the legislative character of John has been a constant study. It is impossible within our limits to note the numberless examples of a similar kind. There is enough known to beget a spirit of toleration even in an age crying out for revolutionary work. Many deplore the abuses that disgrace the English Church. It has a combination of Ritualism and Rationalism that causes profound regret in the minds of thousands of Christians in this country. But the subject has to be viewed from all sides, and if the Wesleyan body were to assume an attitude of open hostility to the existence of the State Church, could they say with the same confidence, "We are the friends of all, the enemies of none?"

Further, it is not probable that the Congregationalists will influence very deeply the rising band of Wesleyan preachers. The tone of feeling amongst the Independents is so bitter that it engenders caution and reserve rather than encouragement. There will

not be much sympathy found in the Methodist community for men who denounce the State Church as a "hideous pile," and "a gigantic mockery." Mr. Thorold Rogers, with dashing epigram, has criticised the position of the Establishment, and his words have been echoed by the Liberationists in several public meetings. The advocacy of the Liberation Society progamme, at the annual attack on the State Church in the Metropolitan Tabernacle, is sometimes so severe that Mr. Spurgeon has to say a kind word for the bishops, though he takes sides with the Liberationists. The enthusiasm, which marks the Independents in this subject, has led to the conviction in some quarters that the movement is pushed forward at the expense sometimes of the spiritual interests of the body. In its political aspects, Congregationalism is robust. It takes a keen delight in political movements. Stimulated by the *Nonconformist*, a journal conducted with great ability, the Independents devote a great deal of their time to the consideration of what are called the evils of a church connected with the State.

One effect of this must be to diminish the amount of attention that ought to be given to purely religious matters. No one can defend the burial scandals, and, on this question, the leaders of the Independents have the right to agitate with much energy. All persecution in the villages at the hands of the English clergy is indefensible, and must be protested against. We must gain equality here, just rights must be maintained. But in respect to the great question of Disestablishment, perhaps the Independents might wisely show a little more tolerance. Dean Stanley,

speaking in Westminster Abbey on St. Andrew's Day, remarked that it was uncharitable, intolerant, and unjust for the English Church of an earlier day to attempt to crush Nonconformity, but he held that it was equally uncharitable, and equally intolerant and unjust for Nonconformity to attempt to overthrow the English Church in these times. He meant of course the attempt to cut it from the State.

Our primary object, as we have already observed, is not to discuss the justice or the injustice of Disestablishment, but to point out the reasonableness of the position taken up by the leaders of the Wesleyan Church. In view of the distinctive genius of Methodism, apart from the purely theoretical or political questions, such men as Dr. Osborn, Dr. Rigg, Mr. Arthur, Dr. Pope and Dr. Punshon, shew wisdom in not actively identifying themselves with the Liberation Society. Mr. Benjamin Gregory has not yet opened the pages of the *Magazine* to attacks upon the Church as a State establishment. The men high in office have, as far as we have been able to gather, not disclosed any desire to unite the active politician with the energetic religionist. They see that there is other work to do, about which there ought to be a pressing concern. They, and many more of their brethren, appear to think that the cause of Christian truth in England will be best served by keeping the eye of the younger men fixed steadily on the one central principle—the spread of holiness, and to live in charity with all men.

It is perhaps a difficult question to answer how far the rising generation of Wesleyan preachers will be affected by the burning zeal of the political Indepen-

dent, or by the great tides of opinion that are rolling hither and thither, as restless as the waves of the sea. There may be young spirits panting for what is called freedom, the play of individual conviction in a freer form. But if we may judge from the evidences at our hand, we may assume that it will be a considerable time yet before a large band of crusaders will be found attempting to effect a junction with the Independents on this subject. There is a genuine regard for the Establishment amongst a great number of the younger preachers ; and as it is a conspicuous feature in their character that they do not mix their pulpit ministrations with political allusions, we have an additional testimony to the fact that no serious defection has yet begun. Negatively we may infer that there is no widespread disposition to follow Mr. Robert Dale and his coadjutors.

We by no means forget that those who are clamouring so loudly for Disestablishment, are in many cases able and cultured men. Edward Miall himself is a clear and vigorous thinker, and has largely influenced modern politics. Mr. Dale, of Birmingham, has disclosed high theological and other qualities, apart from his trenchant advocacy on Liberation Society platforms. Mr. Guiness Rogers, though too frequently exhibiting political passion, has sometimes a good deal of force and ability. Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, and Mr. Henry Richard, are a decided acquisition to the Liberation Society.

The Wesleyans will view no doubt with interest and earnestness the movements of these men, whilst they endeavour to maintain what may be called their insular position in spiritual things. We are sure, moreover, that

the friends of the Liberation Society will give credit for good motives. They will not fail to discern that the Methodists put aggressive religious schemes of work before political undertakings. Mr. Edward Miall himself has with generous feeling recognised the distinctive work which they have done, and are still seeking to carry out. He says :—

"The several sects of Methodism in this country have done enough to prove that the masses may be permeated and subdued by Divine truth when aptly and fervently enforced upon them. Indeed, but for their assiduous attention to the poor, their comparative disregard of social distinctions in their ecclesiastical economy, and their wise adaptation of means to ends in their machinery of aggression upon the world, it is hard to conceive what would now have been the desperate spiritual condition of the working classes in this country."* This is a tribute indeed for which we are grateful. It appears in a work which ought to be better known. Full of vigorous thought and practical observations, it should be pondered by every Dissenter who wishes to make himself familiar with the latent capacities, the undeveloped resources of the British Churches.

It ought to be their aim still to win the same approval from such a man as Mr. Miall. Nor is it easy to see how amid such growing evils—evils that are sinking into the basis of society—they can turn the tide of their aggressive efforts into other channels. Romanism, scepticism, unbelief, and cold indifference must all be met by a practical test. It will be folly to turn aside into bye-paths while the great highways

* *British Churches*, p. 222.

are the centres of wickedness. The Wesleyan Church, with its mission of universal pardon, and its proclamation of purity of heart, as the salvation of men and nations, has no energy to spare on what is considered after all a subject of divided political opinion. To exert a reactionary influence on the English Church in these times, as it has done in bygone days, will be a nobler struggle for Methodism than to set itself to pull to pieces an organization in which admittedly there is a great deal of good. Whilst some Churches are engaged in cavilling about dogma, in crying out for a wider freedom in theology, and others are busy more or less attacking the Establishment, the Wesleyans are raising £200,000 for what may be fairly called purely religious purposes. Nor can it be doubted that they gain in a twofold way. It may be said of this noble Thanksgiving Fund, that it blesseth those who give, and those who take, perhaps in a profounder sense than the poet could have anticipated. If the inner springs which moved this great financial effort could be seen or known to the full extent, we should get some idea of the reactionary influence called into existence—we mean the increased spiritual strength, the deeper faith and trust, the more exalted endeavour, and the sweet and tranquil joy which all giving for the great Taskmaster brings. The majority of the members of the Connexion have apparently looked upon it as a privilege, no less than a duty.

There is one feature, too, about this financial scheme which ought not to pass unnoticed. It is very generally admitted that the preachers themselves have given nobly. Carping agitators, if there

were any, would scarcely be able to brand this as a selfish scheme, designed and carried out for objects suiting the convenience or the comfort of the ministers. No such stigma as that is possible. We question very much, whether any recent subscription list in this country could disclose such evidence of self-denial. Men with small salaries, with few of the luxuries of life, have given for themselves, for their wives, for children on earth and for children in heaven. Old brethren in the field have been recognised, and by thus identifying their names with a subscription, some of the best and most hallowed associations have been reawakened, perhaps to flourish in perpetual youth. The dead have been, so to speak, brought to life again, and the masters who charmed by their eloquence, or who convinced by their heart-searching appeals, and spread fine characters at our feet, reappear before the mind's eye in increasing freshness and bloom. Only those who have given, can understand the genuine satisfaction which results from a going out of self into that other region, where the breath of self never comes, and where we find our higher nature realised in ideals that temper and soften, as with tranquil light, the vicissitudes of our daily lives. The Thanksgiving Fund resuscitates the wondrous history of Methodism, and to not a few the past, with its sainted memories, lives over again. Had the Methodists been immersed in political movements could they have made this fund so much of a success, and a success from more than one point of view?

It would not be a bad idea in these days of agitation and revolutionary schemes to recommend a perusal of

the life of John Wesley—not a superficial and partial reading of the great Reformer, but a careful and persistent study. Such an effort would repay any man. Of all the remarkable men that have lived within the last two centuries, perhaps John Wesley is less understood than any other. Outside the sphere of the Wesleyan Communion there still exists, in some degree at least, that prejudice which was felt against the name of Methodist in a previous time. This prevents the Wesleyans from getting a fair consideration for the work and character of their Founder. Such a consideration is not required from the point of view of seeking the applause of the outward world. It would be beneficial, inasmuch as there is a great deal in the mental and moral constitution of Wesley worth studying. The complaint was echoed a few years ago that no satisfactory biography of him existed. There were some fairly written works, but they were produced within too narrow limits, whilst on the other hand, the biography of Southey, though fine on its purely literary side, was generally considered an unsatisfactory performance. No such grievance exists now. The comprehensive and painstaking biography of the Rev. Luke Tyerman places before us John Wesley in a manner that leaves no regret. In three large volumes Mr. Tyerman has worked out his subject with diligence and discrimination, and presented us with a well defined and noble picture. He has given us the best materials yet put before the public for forming an estimate of a man who was in many respects wonderful, whose genius for government, according to Macaulay, was not inferior to that of Richelieu. Mr. Tyerman cannot be

too highly lauded for this most excellent work. It is a pity that it is not more generally read. Perhaps an abridged edition might prove a valuable source of information to many Methodists, and it would be worth the perusal of a great many more not directly associated with the Wesleyan Church.

It may not be inappropriate parenthetically to refer to Mr. Tyerman's services to the Methodist communion. Entering the body in 1844 he has travelled in the most influential circuits, and won the reputation of a great preacher. We have been told that a high authority reckoned him the best preacher in England. Mr. Tyerman himself would be the first to say that this was an exaggeration, but we cannot deny the fact that his name is a powerful one in the annals of the Methodist pulpit. Of late years he has not preached so frequently, but he occasionally shows his old fire and reminds one of other days. He has no sympathy with many of the customs now visible in some pulpits. He does not like the "catches from Shakespeare," that some young preachers throw into their sermons: and he has denounced this species of eloquence with all the energies of his nature.

There is no man in the whole range of the circuits more jealous for the purely spiritual power of the pulpits. And we gather that he would be one of the last men to incite the younger brethren to any political crusade against the Established Church—a crusade which might have the effect of diverting them from their legitimate functions, never more needed than now. We give that as our opinion. No other one is responsible for it. Men like Mr. Tyerman look upon preaching as the most momentous of all tasks. And

he would regard the pulpit of the Wesleyan Church as one whose privileges and duties ought to be carefully and rigidly guarded.

And now we return, after this digression, to the point we are anxious to enforce. The life of Wesley was unique from many points of view, and it is no doubt an interesting inquiry to put in these stirring political times, as to what John Wesley himself would have done had he been living. It is not generally safe to speculate upon what a man would or would not have done, had he been living at a particular time. But in this case, as we have hinted already, we can measure with some degree of accuracy. The unwearied activity of the man in one constant resistless cause, his singular grasp and tenacious hold of one central idea, his uttter disregard of all that would stamp his work with a worldly tint, his aversion to everything except that which bore directly on the spiritual welfare of the people of England, would lead us to believe, apart from other weighty considerations, that he could have no part or lot in political agitation. That appears, moreover, to be the view of those who have succeeded him.

A statement was made at a meeting lately in Mr. Spurgeon's Tabernacle to the effect that the Wesleyans are fast going over to the Liberation Society. One speaker asserted that they were passing that way in thousands. No evidence was given in support of the statement, and though a man may be allowed to estimate a particular force, this speaker, we think, spoke somewhat recklessly. But when all this is said it cannot be doubted that in such a shifting time, the Church of England ought to see that its relations with the Wes-

leyans are of a cordial character. The latter could undoubtedly swell, and perhaps accelerate, an agitation. The opposition to the theory of a State Church is not likely, under ordinary circumstances, to affect them largely ; but if the Church continues to display anything in the shape of a persecuting spirit towards Methodism in the villages, it is hard to say what the result may be. Recent proceedings of bigotry and intolerance have already made a breach, and the wonder is the breach is not wider. The Church ought to take the advice of the *Times* and see that no burials scandals are permitted to exist ; and the greater dignitaries in the Establishment should take some action that would prevent their less influential brethren from enforcing the spirit of intolerance, as has been done lately in many parts of England. The Rev. Dr. Smith, one of the ex-presidents of the Wesleyan Conference, had repeatedly to complain of the persecution to which Methodists were subjected in the villages. But for the profound respect entertained by the Wesleyan leaders for much that is great and beneficial in the English Church, probably more would have been heard of this matter. The Methodists will undoubtedly assert their rights, though not as a body seeking the separation of the Church from the State. If the clergy were to perpetuate a system of persecution, or even petty intolerance, the penalty that would have to be paid would, in all probability, be the alliance of a larger number of Methodists with the Liberation Society. A true Church policy, therefore, ought to dictate the more conciliatory course. A large and constantly expanding community like the Wesleyans

will feel sensitive in regard to any infringement of their rights.

The lay element is a great factor in that community, and that influence must be reckoned upon. It is not easy to measure the strength of feeling that exists amongst the laymen, in relation to the Disestablishment question. Many of them are independent thinkers, as well as good citizens; but out of the respect in which they hold their ministers, they have not organized any action in this matter. As long as the preachers hold aloof, as a body, from touching a political movement directly, the laymen will probably follow them. But if, stung to the quick by an overbearing intolerance, or a repetition of petty persecution, the ministers were to change their neutral political attitude, the laymen would immediately support them.

It is only fair to say that already two or three Members of Parliament, belonging to the Wesleyan Church, have been seen on the Liberation platform. Mr. Samuel Waddy, M.P., has spoken at the Tabernacle at the annual meeting of the Liberation Society. He is a gentleman of whom the Wesleyans are proud. Though enjoying the training of an excellent father, and entering on life with many advantages, he may be claimed as a man who has won his position by the energies of his character. He combines several remarkable qualities, and has attained no small influence in recent years, both as an ecclesiastic and a politician. He is listened to with much respect in the House of Commons, where he grows in power. Some prophetic journalists see in him the member of a future Liberal Government, perhaps an attorney-

general, for he has been distinguished as a lawyer. Others again will not be surprised if he should eventually become Lord Chancellor. Mr. Waddy is a sound Liberal, and whilst throwing the weight of his abilities into all measures of a thorough liberal character, he will no doubt resent firmly the intolerance we have referred to. He has a natural hatred of all oppression, bad and unjust government. This was clearly revealed in the speeches he delivered on the foreign policy of the Ministry. Now that the laymen have acquired larger influence in the deliberations of the Wesleyan body, it is not placing him too high to say that he could, in any crisis, increase the force of a party in the Methodist Church, who resolved upon a direct attack on the Establishment, if the latter adopted a too exclusive spirit towards Dissenters.

It ought to be mentioned that the Liberation platform is perhaps avoided by the Wesleyans for other reasons than those referred to. There can be no doubt that the mixed character of the advocates of Disestablishment is objectionable to a numerous section of the Methodists. We cannot wonder at this, for it is objectionable to some influential Congregationalists. As an illustration of this we may quote a somewhat remarkable letter which lately appeared in the *Times*. A London clergyman forwarded this letter, which had been written by a Congregationalist minister to a Dissenting newspaper.

He says :—"How is our duty in this matter (the Disestablishment movement) to be discharged? At present we are discharging it almost entirely on the political platform, in company with Unitarians,

Positivists, Deists, Atheists, and Nationalists of all kinds, many of whom would disestablish religion altogether if they had the power. I do not wonder that members of the Church of England misunderstand our aim, and consider our action as inconsistent with our position and history, and as dangerous to our common Christianity. Nor do I wonder at the secularized spirit which of late years has overtaken many of our Churches. The energy and money which we have been devoting in this warfare would have been much more advantageously spent in keeping hundreds of our ministers from the verge of starvation, in preserving numbers of our churches from decay and inanition, in planting and fostering new churches in the great centres of our population, and in uprooting flagrant and notorious abuses in our own denomination —abuses as iniquitous as any which can be found in the Church of England. And if, like our forefathers, we had fought this battle less as politicians and more as Christians, less with the political bludgeon and more with the sword of the Spirit, less upon the 'rights of man' and more upon the Word of God, our denomination and our principles would have spread more extensively, and commanded more respect. In this view I am thankful that I am not alone. There is a strong feeling among many of our most godly ministers and laymen that what I complain of is a blunder, both as regards the effect which it produces upon the minds of Church people, and also as regards the bad influence which it exerts upon our denomination. It widens the breach between the Church of England and ourselves ; it diverts money and energy from necessitous, denominational channels ; it turns away attention from

the fearful evils which exist in our midst; it begets a secularised spirit among us; it blights spiritual life; it interferes with Christian work; and thus it retards not only the progress of our denomination, but also that of the kingdom of Christ in the earth."

Mr. Matthew Arnold, with his usual delicacy of touch, says, "The more the sense of religion grows, and of religion in a large way,—the sense of the beauty and rest of religion, the sense that its charm lies in its grace and peace,—the more will the present attitude, objections and complaints of the Dissenters indispose men's minds to them. They will, I firmly believe, lose ground; they will not keep hold of the new generations. In most of the mature Dissenters the spirit of scruple, objection taking, and division is, I fear, so ingrained, that in any proffered terms of union they are more likely to seize occasion for fresh cavil than occasion for peace. But the new generations will be otherwise minded. As to the Church's want of grace and peace in disputing the ground with Dissent, the justice of what Barrow says will be more and more felt:—"He that being assaulted is constrained to stand on his defence, may not be said to be in peace; yet his not being so (involuntarily) is not to be imputed to him. But the Dissenters have not this, the Church's excuse, for being men of war in a sphere of grace and peace. And they turn themselves into men of war more and more."

Mr. Arnold puts his case extremely well against the "philosophical Radicals," who think that religion is all a chimæra, but they might object that he is somewhat backward in acknowledging the evils or the mischief in the English Church. Such an admission would

not have perhaps damaged his argument to an alarming extent. The English Church has not much to hope on the score of generosity from the purely "political Dissenter," that is to say the latter will not be careful to see how far he can improve the Church. At present it is his absorbing passion to find out its faults. Now the Wesleyans have, as a body at any rate, the desire for Mr. Arnold's "grace and peace," and they are therefore not "political Dissenters." Many of the Methodists regard the movements of the Liberationists with suspicion. They think that a section of them are aiming not only at the separation of the Church from the State, but at the overthrow of all religion. It was in the Memorial Hall that Mr. Frederic Harrison, one of the apostles of Positivism, delivered a well-known lecture on Disestablishment. The Methodist shakes his head at these portentous events; and, as we have elsewhere noticed, he is above all things anxious that the Body should not lose the keen edge of its spirituality, or in Mr. Arnold's phraseology, its "grace and peace," by mixing in the schemes of "scientific Liberalism," or "Dissent" minus religious life. The author of *Last Essays on Church and Religion* puts this point vigorously in the following passage:—

"Look at one of the ablest of the Dissenters, who is much before the public, and whose abilities I unfeignedly admire—Mr. Dale. Mr. Dale is really a pugilist, a brilliant pugilist. He has his arena down at Birmingham, where he does his practice with Mr. Chamberlain and Mr. Jesse Collings, and the rest of his band, and then from time to time he comes up to the metropolis, to London, and gives a public

exhibition here of his skill. And a very powerful performance it often is. And the *Times* observes that the chief Dissenting ministers are becoming quite the intellectual equals of the ablest of the clergy. Very likely; this sort of practice is just the right thing for bracing a man's intellectual muscles. I have no fear concerning Mr. Dale's intellectual muscles; what I am a little uneasy about is his religious temper. The essence of religion is grace and peace. And though no doubt Mr. Dale cultivates grace and peace at other times, when he is not busy with his anti-Church practice, yet his cultivation of grace and peace can be none the better, and must naturally be something the worse, for the time and energy given to his pugilistic interludes. And the more that mankind, instead of placing their religion in all manner of things where it is not, come to place it in sheer goodness, and in grace and peace—and this is the tendency, I think, with the English people—the less favourable will public opinion be to the proceedings of the political Dissenters, and the less has the Church to fear from their pugnacious self-assertion."*

The Bishop of Manchester lately asserted that the English Church is in harmony with the spirit of the age. He said it had a great future before it, a mighty work for God, which no other body in the land could perform so fully and adequately, because they had not the same vantage ground. He wished the Church of England to be, in the broadest and largest sense, the church of the English people, because he believed there were larger hearts and larger thoughts prevalent

* *Essays on Church and Religion*, p. 185.

in the minds of Churchmen trying to find utterance. He rejoiced to see the Church extending herself as she is on every side. He denied that she was either effete or worn out.

Almost simultaneously Mr. Gladstone, in another place, made the following remarks :—"We all of us believe that the difficulties of the Church of England are great. She has had difficulties to encounter, and she may have more ; she has had controversies within and without, and we cannot hope that the voice of controversy will all at once be lulled. It is not difficult to find matter for criticism in her laws and in her action. But, wishing above all things to know the truth, and not wishing to conceal from ourselves any of our defects, it would be shortsighted policy to do so, even if there were no other reason. I believe that we who are here assembled, and thousands, and tens of thousands, and millions, outside these walls, are united in the firm belief that the Church of England has still a great work to perform for herself, for the people, and for Christendom at large."

The principal men in the Methodist Church would probably be the first to re-echo the statement that the English Church has a great work to accomplish, but they are of opinion at the same time that it would be more in harmony with the spirit of the age if it put itself right with the Dissenters on the burials question, and generally set itself to view other bodies as workers in the same field, entitled to the same justice and equality. The Methodists are not yet "political dissenters," and it depends on the State Church itself whether their attitude shall remain in the future as it now is, friendly and generous.

CHAPTER VI.

MISSIONARY ENTERPRISE: FOREIGN AND HOME.

THE modern mind has disclosed a keen taste for romance, books of adventure and of travel. As we have elsewhere remarked, it is the novel, and other stirring works, that rule the circulating libraries with an almost imperial sway. Everywhere people are asking for something that will interest them. Perhaps this is not wonderful in a time of so much strife, fierce competition in business, and harassing work. Wearied of the hum and bustle of the city, business men seek relief in evening hours by turning to what is called light literature. The sensational story, with its false philosophy of life, affords amusement, but for the great purposes of building up the moral and intellectual character, of leaving behind some nobler motives towards beneficent action, it does not, we fear, in every case achieve success. This craving after such works is a real want, and it ought to be satisfied. You cannot crush out the instincts of society. They must be met.

Without seeking to reduce the propagation of religion to the level of the novel, may we not ask whether some of our racy and skilled authors could not find the elements of works of interest in connection with

the great cause of missions, foreign and home. The record of such enterprise is full of human interest. It contains strange and startling events, curious episodes in almost all lands, and the way in which some of the missions originated, and were worked out, brings before us pictures equal in interest to anything that can be found in romance. A great deal of misconception prevails on the question of missions. Perhaps some philosophical writer, taking up the entire subject, might clear away the prevailing misconceptions. At all events a better acquaintance with missionary enterprise, not only in the islands of the Pacific or Southern Africa, in India or China, but in London, Glasgow or Manchester, might accomplish a real and permanent good. Full justice has not been done to the efforts of the various missionary societies. The conversion of the heathen to Christianity is surely a great question. What has been done already is full of absorbing interest, and the story of many a poor missionary's career is as fertile in incident as a number of the fictions that draw many over the midnight hour.

It is not our purpose in this chapter to attempt anything of the kind indicated. The task is too vast for our limits, but no view of the Wesleyan Church would be complete without some recognition of its great services in the mission field.

It is impossible to conceive of a Methodist Church without missions. Essentially missionary in its spirit and aim, that Church began early to work in the foreign fields, and its home operations have been carried out in our large towns with beneficent results. Mr. Moister, in his admirable history, tells us that "the great Head of the Church designed John Wesley for

a higher position that that of an individual missionary in the vast field of the world. He was to be the chief instrument in organising a missionary system which should extend its influence, not only to the simple children of the forest, but to every nation and kindred and people and tongue." The same writer traces the missionary spirit throughout the whole system of development. The activity of the Church in England itself discloses a grand mission scheme. John Wesley visited Scotland in the capacity of an evangelist, and though the work has not taken so wide a hold as some would have liked, the service which has been done is nevertheless great. It had some effect in liberalising the sterner aspects of Scotch theology, and the native churches were in some instances leavened by the spirit of the Methodists. Much, too, of a similar kind was done in Ireland. A very remarkable work, moreover, was accomplished in the Zetland Islands. These isles were for a long time in a condition of spiritual destitution, but from the time of poor John Nicholson, who carried Methodism from London to the islands, extraordinary results have been achieved. As the consequence of his labours the Conference sent some men to Lerwick, when a greater work of transformation was begun. At a subsequent period the great Dr. Clarke, one of the first of biblicists, visited this far off region, his visit becoming a source of special and enduring blessing. Since that time these islands have been the scene of self-denying labour approaching, if not rivalling, the most fertile schemes in remoter fields. The Wesleyan Missionary Society has found no difficulty, year after year, in procuring young men from England, who

have proceeded north at much self-sacrifice. The noble Raby and Dunn were followed by men of the stamp of Langridge, Mackintosh, Stevenson, Dickinson, Lewis, and in later days by Joseph Hewitson, who carried with him a fine spirit for such toil, and a loftiness of purpose not to be estimated by any words of ours.

The wave of mission enterprise rolled also to the Isle of Man, to the Isle of Wight, to the Scilly Isles, where the name of Joseph Sutcliffe lingers as a sweet memory. Gathering force as it went, it spread over the Channel to France, Switzerland, and Germany, as well as Gibraltar, Spain, and Italy, Malta and the Mediterranean. But it is not on the continent of Europe that the most memorable triumphs have been made. Not content with planting churches in the large continental towns, the Methodist missionary spirit winged its way to America, to the West Indies, to Western Africa, to Southern Africa, to Australia, New Zealand, to India and China, and to the Islands that lie on the bosom of the Pacific. In every one of these lands the most remarkable results have followed the toils of the missionaries.

It is no part of our present task to follow these labours in detail. We wish rather to examine for a moment the reactionary influence exerted by the schemes that have been effective alike in India and China, in Western Africa and Fiji. It is a law of physics, we are told, that action and reaction are equal and opposite. Missions in relation to the Wesleyan Church would appear to reveal a similar principle in the moral world. For just in proportion to the strength put forth by the Wesleyans in the foreign

field, have they been active at home. The zeal that carries a man to the unhealthy climate of West Africa, and to Fiji with its cannibalism, comes back with a force which is felt throughout the Connexion. The returned missionaries are a source of perpetual refreshing to the men at home, whilst the noble sums raised amongst the congregations, time after time, give the people a close interest in the heathen world, and they thus procure an additional stream of living water by which their own souls are refreshed.

We need not go far for an illustration of this. Take the annual meeting in Exeter Hall in the month of May, and the numerous sermons preached on the preceding Sunday. The Exeter Hall gathering is one of the most remarkable held in the course of the year in London. It has many aspects worth looking at. In the first place its enthusiasm is a source of interest. The meeting is looked forward to with much eagerness, not only on the part of many London Wesleyans, but hundreds of others, who come up to the metropolis from various parts of England. It is no uncommon thing to find some coming from Leeds, Manchester and Newcastle, and we have heard even of visitors from Scotland and Ireland.

All this must have its root elsewhere than in any merely ephemeral feeling. The truth is those who join the Wesleyan body are bound sooner or later to assimilate a good deal of the missionary spirit. It runs through the system, penetrating it from the one end to the other. This enthusiasm in the mission cause is nourished by the influence of men who have returned from the foreign field. The Methodist body

in this respect is different from some other churches. In the case of the latter a returned missionary is pushed into any corner, being apparently considered a worn-out man or an extinguished flame. With far more wisdom the Wesleyan Conference exalts the men, who have come from foreign service, into the highest positions in the Church at home, so that the man who has laboured in India or in Fiji, is deemed a perfectly fit instrument for the conversion of the people in London, in Leeds, Bradford, or Manchester. It is a wise policy, and a just one too. The man who has struggled with the cannabilism of Fiji, or who has laboured in China for a series of years, can put fresh life into the gospel message, even before a fashionable and cultivated London congregation. The adaptation of the spirit of the Christian religion to all types of the race is thus more clearly seen, and the essential disinterested element of the gospel more widely developed.

The gatherings in Exeter Hall during the time of the May meetings become every year a source of strength, for the reports of these gatherings are read over the country with the liveliest interest. Who can forget, for instance, the great meeting some years ago, when Dr. Punshon vindicated the mission cause with all the fervour of his eloquence, and gave his wonderful dream. No one who heard or read that speech can forget it. On that occasion, too, William O. Simpson gave clear evidence of his persuasive powers, whilst Charles Garrett and others aroused a feeling that swept the hearts of all present, and beat upon the mind of the Wesleyans throughout the country. It is at such assemblies, moreover, that

the ladies of the body show their attention to the comprehensive and bolder schemes of the Church. Here you may witness an array of ladies that would do a vast service in any movement. Refined, intelligent, religious, active, and enthusiastic, they manifest on such anniversaries a considerable amount of strength, and without them the missionary campaign would be shorn of much of its power and grandeur. Handsome collections are made on these occasions, that go to swell the funds of the Society. The breakfast meetings at the Cannon Street Hotel also, further illustrate the intensity of the Church in its desire to propagate the gospel in foreign lands. Similar remarks will apply to all the large commercial centres in England, in Scotland, and Ireland ; and indeed the various auxiliaries of the Mission House in Bishopsgate Street. The names of the missionaries are everywhere a force. The Methodists are encouraged by such names as Warrener, Dr. Coke, the Shaws, the Freemans, the Morgans, Clough, Hardy, and Gogerly, Lawry, Waterhouse, Black, Boardman, Arthur, Calvert, Hunt, William Wilson, Boyce, Lyth, Rule, and many others.

It has not been our privilege to see all these men, but some of their forms are familiar to us. We have never ceased to remember the genuine fire that burned in Calvert, the noble endeavours on behalf of a savage race, the eminent bravery, the heroic soul with the supreme self-denial characteristic of this man. Need we say anything here of William Arthur's interest in the cause of missions. It is part and parcel of his intellectual and spiritual system. No man has a stronger or more vital faith in the efficacy of the

gospel to transform the heathen world. He at least will not be put aside by the cavils of scholars and learned men at home, who tell us that Christianity is impotent to civilize the heathen, or to change their moral nature. He is one of the best missionary speakers we have ever heard. To hear him speak of William Shaw and his labours in Southern Africa, was something to be remembered.

Mr. Arthur was once on a deputation to a great University city. His name had preceded him. He was known as one of the foremost men in the Wesleyan Church, and he was known also as a man who carried his weight far beyond the limits of his own denomination. Many not directly connected with the Methodists went to hear him. They expected to hear some fine intellectual disquisition, some *résumé* of current sceptical forces, and a vigorous vindication of the gospel in the face of these—a vindication from the point of view of a scholar, or a man accustomed to speak with dialectical skill. They were disappointed. Mr. Arthur was full of William Shaw and his South African toils, and in the simplest way possible, he put before his audience the results of Mr. Shaw's labours. The effect, if not exactly what was expected, was nevertheless conspicuously fine. We have seldom seen Mr. Arthur more animated, more imbued with the higher element of his religion. In neat, clear, and steady language he pointed out the success that had attended the efforts of William Shaw. The inference was clear enough. Mr. Arthur wished to show how the gospel could vindicate its imperial claims in the redemption of the world. His soul was full, his eye

having true fire in it, and his language passionate with the tone of conviction, as all his language is. As long as the Wesleyan Body retain such men as Mr. Arthur, the cause of missions will not decrease in strength.

Many forms rise before our vision here, but we cannot write of them all. We are anxious to say, however, that it has always occurred to us that Dr. Punshon possesses the same spirit in large degree. Few of the men have given more attention to the distinctive feature involved in Wesleyan missions. He has gone to the root of the matter, and after long and careful examination, he comes to tell us that the principle at the base of all our missionary operations is a sound one. Moreover, it is a principle that is bound to succeed. It is very admirable indeed to hear the most eloquent of divines himself telling us that it is neither by eloquence nor scholarship that the world is to be redeemed, but by the "foolishness of preaching," meaning by that, the plain and straightforward proclamation of the truth associated with the Divine Spirit, the foundation of all success, and without which there can be no genuine success. This was the burden of a remarkable discourse preached lately by him on the subject in question. Nothing could have been finer than this sermon. It was a magnificent claim to the effect that the gospel of Christ is the one remedy for all our woes, and that it can only be effectually preached by men themselves changed by its power. Here was no mere eloquence of language, but true eloquence of soul, and the effect was exceedingly fine, and that too in the sense of being convincing, which is the best test of spiritual power.

His colleague at the Mission House, Marmaduke Osborn, carries with him the missionary spirit too. He has an ample knowledge on the subject, and can preach with eloquence. He made a very successful speech lately on the platform of Exeter Hall. Having just returned from visiting the West Indian department of the missions, he was in a position to speak with authority and with experience. The speech delivered on the occasion was of a most interesting character. Mr. Osborn takes a broad view of affairs, and has some of the qualities of a statesman. He said "We have a great work to do in the West Indies, and a great interest at stake—a work we must not abandon, and a work which has paid us very well in the past. We have now 50,000 members of Society, 15,000 people under our ministry, and 50,000 children in our day and Sunday-schools. We must not starve the work, and we must not think of giving up, just now, the result of our toil and sacrifice for a hundred years. We must wisely and judiciously consolidate and extend the work, and put it upon a better basis."

Speaking of Mr. Osborn's recent speech at Exeter Hall reminds us of another, delivered on the same occasion, by one whose evidence must come with the greatest possible weight. The Wesleyans are generally able to secure some one occupying a high place in the earth to adorn the great meeting which annually takes place in Exeter Hall. It is no small honour to be asked to speak at that assembly, and we once heard of some great man, who said that he would rather be President of the Wesleyan Conference than Prime Minister of England. It is no doubt true that a good many men would prefer the former office to the latter.

But be this as it may, Sir Arthur Gordon, the Governor of Fiji, recognised the distinguished honour laid upon his head when the Committee invited him to speak on a late occasion. His excellency seemed peculiarly delighted under the circumstances, and we could wish that many more of the men holding high Government positions would do themselves the honour of speaking on such platforms.

Sir Arthur's tribute to the value of Wesleyan missionary effort in the Pacific was a most valuable one. The friends were much pleased with it. If his excellency did not speak with as much enthusiasm as Mr. Simpson or Mr. Gorman, he gave his convictions with some animation, and, best of all, with the clear persuasion of speech that discloses truth and sincerity for its basis. Sir Arthur's language is decidedly worth quoting at a time when we are told by a high authority that the history of civilisation is the history of scholarship. "My testimony to the work which I have seen going on in the Pacific is not perhaps really of much importance. Still, it is the evidence of a man who is not a member of the Wesleyan body, and who in the course of a varied life has had opportunities of observation which, if he has not wholly thrown them away, must enable him, more or less, to form some judgment on what is put before him. It is the testimony of one whose official position ensures his being made acquainted with all that can be said against the missions, and with every kind of accusation that can be brought against them. In that capacity, I say, my evidence may not, perhaps, be considered as utterly valueless. I, therefore, give it; and I say that in my opinion it is impossible to use exaggerated

language, or to speak in too strong terms of the wonderful services and the wonderful results, both religious and social, which have attended the Wesleyan missions in the Pacific. All those who are acquainted in the slightest degree with the history of Wesleyan missions, must be more or less acquainted with the history and origin of their mission to Fiji. You all know, therefore, what was the state of the country when that mission was undertaken. You all know that, within the memory of living men, that condition was perpetual tribal wars, cannibalism, infanticide, murders of widows, every kind of evil and wickedness perpetrated universally. Those were the characteristics of the people of the Fiji Islands. What is their condition now? Their condition now is as different from what it was then as can possibly be conceived. Out of a population of something like 120,000, more than 102,000 are regular attendants at Wesleyan churches, and the remaining 18,000 are not heathens, but for the most part members of other Christian churches. Those who have not made open profession of Christianity are but a few old men here and there, who are not to be considered or thought of when speaking of the Fijians as a people. The people of Fiji are now a Christian people. Not to mention smaller and inferior places of worship, about 800 churches have been built. Of course there are some persons who will say that this conversion to Christianity is often but external and unreal. Those statements I certainly am prepared emphatically to deny. I am quite sure that the lives and hearts of thousands among them are really swayed and guided by Christian principles, and that Christian doctrine does

exercise a real and true influence over their lives and actions."*

Surely nothing can be stronger than this. It is a marked testimony to the heroic work of such men as Hunt, Baker, Calvert, and Wilson. The latter gentleman mentioned, the Rev. William Wilson, now of York, has, in numerous platform addresses during the last few years, spoken with powerful effect of the influence of Christianity upon the Fiji Islands. Like his brethren he went to those dark lands in the Pacific at the risk of his life. He pursued his labours with zeal, sometimes in the face of death and much vicissitude, and came back to England to proclaim faith in all mission work, and to speak of the singular adaptation of the gospel to the most barbarous natures. Few more interesting spectacles have been witnessed on the modern platform than the appearances of William Wilson.

This subject might be pursued to a great length, but we have said enough to vindicate for the Wesleyan Church a very conspicuous position in the annals of foreign missionary enterprise. In a retrospect the Rev. William Moister writes: "The signs of the times warrant our anticipation of the speedy fulfilment of ancient prophecy, and the second advent of Christ to rule more fully in His Church and in the hearts of all His faithful people. How wonderful the changes which have taken place during the last half century, all tending to prepare the way of the Lord! Slavery has been abolished throughout the British empire, and by terrible things in righteousness America has been constrained to relinquish her favourite

* *Methodist Recorder*, May 9, 1879.

domestic institution, whilst the different nations in Europe are giving up their claim to the right of property in their fellow men. Africa has been explored and made known to Christian philanthropists to an extent never before realised; and the diseases peculiar to the unhealthy western coast are now better understood, and consequently less fatal than formerly. India, China, and Japan are thrown open to the commerce and Christian enterprise of the western world. France, Spain, and Italy are no longer closed against the Bible and Protestant truth. The dreadful war, which has desolated some of the fairest portions of the European continent, may be overruled in the Providence of God, as in former similar cases, for the wider extension of religious liberty and the freer promulgation of the everlasting gospel. The temporal power of Papal Rome is a thing of the past, and Popery itself seems to totter to its foundation. The way is now open to the Wesleyan Missionary Society, as well as to other kindred evangelical institutions, to plant the standard of the cross in the Eternal City, and St. Peter's itself may soon resound with the free proclamation of that gospel for which the fisherman-apostle lived, laboured, suffered, and died.*

Turning from the field of foreign missions to the home work we shall find not a little to arouse our interest. Home missionary labour within the last few years has assumed much larger proportions. The churches have extended their operations considerably. To have no such operations in the Wesleyan body would be a great anomaly. Exercising the true in-

* Moister's *History of Missions*, p. 543.

stincts of Methodism, the successors of Wesley have been diligent in making provision for the masses in our large towns lying beyond the direct arm of the Church. In the minutes of the Conference we are told that the appalling moral and social condition of the large towns and the rural districts demands a much larger share of practical sympathy, and we gather both from the regulations laid down by the Wesleyan Missionary Committee, and the practical application of the principles, so far as we have been able to see them, that no sectarian end is aimed at. In this great work, which is second to none that engages the attention of the thoughtful Christian, there is no attempt made to proselytize. The object is not to win the dejected masses to Methodism, but to Christianity.

Many of the best ministers, many of the most philanthropic laymen, regret that the home missionary machinery is not adequate to the crying necessities of the time. Of this there cannot be the slightest doubt. Much has been accomplished—thanks to the splendid liberality of Sir Francis Lycett and other laymen ; but there are wide fields that have scarcely been touched—long, barren wastes over which the breath of evangelical effort has not yet swept. There probably never was a time requiring so extensive operations as the present. An improved education among the lower orders has enabled them to read, but not always to read wisely. Like an Asiatic plague a superficial and foul literature sweeps across the dark lanes and alleys of the larger towns and cities with fatal effects. The low gin-shop completes the work that this miserable literature begins. None but those

who have ventured out on some dark night into the moral wastes of London, Liverpool, or Manchester can know the depth of the depravity that exists. It is not to be wondered at that some men, when speaking of foreign schemes, should turn round and say "Physician, heal thyself." But it is a matter for gratitude that Wesleyans have not been altogether idle in seeking the amelioration, socially and morally, of the neglected and outcast populations nestling in semi-barbarism and vice in the black corners of civilisation. Edward Telfer, Charles Garrett, William H. Booth, and a host more are struggling to drag certain portions of our cities out of darkness. Edward Telfer has always exhibited the characteristics of a good man for such work. He has abundance of energy, an irrepressible spirit, a dauntless courage, and a faith in his purposes that have rendered him a successful man in such schemes. The attempt to work a reform in the City of London cannot be too highly admired and encouraged. Charles Garrett is a born philanthropist, and his services to some of the most important social movements of the time have won for him very general appreciation. In the pulpit and on the platform he is alike popular, and the working classes claim him as their friend. Not only has he taken an important part in the temperance reformation, but he has been identified in a very active way with the coffee-palace movement, which is now reaching considerable dimensions, and working wonders in our great centres. He has accomplished a noble work in Liverpool, and it cannot be doubted that his influence over younger men must have been beneficial. By his activity in the less refined work of the Methodist Church he has

said "Go and do likewise." Younger in the field, but characterised by a similar energy, is William H. Booth. The Hackney Wick scheme discloses a boldness and breadth such as few young men would attempt. We have been informed that thus far success is crowning his labours. A field so fertile, a scheme so fine, ought to win the practical sympathies of the laymen, so that the venture may be carried out to a triumphant issue. East London opens out a vast field for the evangelist; and, happily, some earnest men are found there.

We take the work of Bowman Stephenson to be an essentially home-mission scheme. With some eccentricities of character this man has revealed some very striking qualities. Original in the scope of his energies, fearless in facing a plan which few men would have faced, he has carried through a campaign as difficult and complicated perhaps as any warrior ever attempted. Increasing attention must be given to such work as that in which Bowman Stephenson has been so vigorously and so successfully engaged.

Mr. Stephenson's labours call for more than a passing notice. In a London drawing-room one night we saw a gentleman who was evidently looked upon as a celebrity. That is Mr. Stephenson, whispered a friend. We had heard enough about his great philanthropic work in Bethnal Green and elsewhere to be profoundly interested, and to covet an introduction to the reverend gentleman. We were aware that his history was a very remarkable one. He came from the country to London, and whilst discharging his duties as a minister he made the outcast population his special study. He was in the Lambeth district, near a notorious place called the "New Cut." "I

soon saw little children," he says, "in a condition that made my heart bleed. There they were, ragged, shoeless, filthy; their faces pinched with hunger, and premature wretchedness staring out of their too bright eyes; and I began to feel that now my time was come. Here were my poor little brothers and sisters sold to hunger and the devil, and I could not be free of their blood if I did not at least try to save some of them." Long before, he had been brought to the conviction that "the religion which does not fathom the social deeps, and heal the social sores, cannot be Christ's religion."

He set about his work with true statesmanship. He considered the best methods to be applied to English habits, and resolved upon adopting the family system which was commended by Dr. Guthrie. A few friends having been consulted a beginning was made. The house taken was very small, not much bigger than a cottage. It had a stable at the back which served for the dining-room and the lavatory. The loft was the dormitory. The playground was exceedingly scanty, not more than four yards square being available for that purpose. This accommodation, it will be admitted was small enough, but with the exercise of considerable ingenuity Mr. Stephenson succeeded in taking twenty poor boys into this contracted home. The work was entirely dependent upon the contributions of friends, but the scheme was generally accepted as a noble one, and so the money came in amazingly. The debts were paid every week, whilst the work extended rapidly. In a year the work had outgrown the premises and an adjoining house was rented, the number of boys being meanwhile increased to thirty-seven. But this was

only a foretaste of the larger development that was to follow. Mr. Stephenson and his work became the talk of the neighbourhood. Ladies and gentlemen of position and wealth began to take notice of the scheme; and as the application for admissions increased so did the funds. At length the premises in Lambeth were seen to be totally inadequate, and the present site was secured in Bonner Road, Bethnal Green.

Bethnal Green is not the most aristocratic or salubrious of London districts. The very name recalls long dismal lanes with small shops buried in a murky atmosphere. But Victoria Park is not far away, with its fine walks and little lakes of water. Within a few minutes' walk of this park stands "The Children's Home." The terrace fronting the road, which forms the Home, in no way looks like a public institution, the houses being such as you would see in any other terrace in the metropolis. Grounds at the back and buildings in the front proclaim that the institution has been one of gradual adaptation to existing circumstances. Good business offices meet you as you enter the gateway, a large open space leading to the ample playground within. The first object that strikes the eye of the visitor, on passing to the playground, is a neat—one might even say handsome—little chapel built of red and white brick. This edifice has a curious history, and the guide who conducted us over the Home told some interesting particulars in connection with the erection of the chapel. One gentleman presented the body of the building, the chancel is the gift of the officers now engaged in the institution, the organ chamber is the

gift of the children of the Home, and the turret for the clock is a present from some friends in Yorkshire. Several of the internal fittings are also tokens of individual interest in the work, including the font, the reading desk, and the carpet and cushions. Mr. Stephenson has always maintained that religion must be the centre of such work, and so the chapel is one of his pet schemes. It is a remarkably fine sight to see the children—some two hundred and thirty of them—gathered in this chapel every Sunday morning, each one clean and tidily dressed. Underneath the chapel are the schoolrooms, large and well ventilated, and here again the expense was defrayed by friends. The money requisite for the erection of the schoolrooms was mainly furnished by the sons of well-to-do laymen in the Wesleyan Church, thus affording another proof of the sympathy of the laity of the Methodists in all benevolent institutions.

People go far and near in the great world of London to see strange sights, but here in Bethnal Green is a little world well worth looking into for an hour or two. It is impossible to describe in detail this grand organization. Let the reader go and see it in full operation, and he will have his heart opened more thoroughly than he can ever hope to have by perusing novels that profess to delineate the virtues that may be found lurking in the degraded populations of the great centres of English life. Yet this institution is the product of the genius and energy of one man. No wonder that Christian people give such practical support. The subscriptions, which come from all parts of the world, make up several pages in the reports, and some kind friends have left legacies in

their wills on behalf of the Children's Home. On each house is placed an inscription setting forth the circumstances under which possession of the building was obtained. This is done, not so much in the praise of the donors as with a view to the moral education of the children, by way of example and encouragement.

Mr. Stephenson is to be congratulated upon his work, not only by the Methodist public, but by all true-hearted philanthropists. In the after time his name will probably rank with that of Dr. Guthrie, and even of John Howard.

Not far from the spot where Mr. Stephenson puts his Christianity to so fine a use there are other workers with a similar spirit. We have already mentioned Mr. Booth at Hackney Wick, but the list would include Allen Rees, George Curnock, and William Waters, to whose evangelical zeal and steady thoughtful purpose, portions of Spitalfield's district are yielding, and showing the fruit of reformation. Extending our view we should have to mention Stratford and Clapton, where John Wright and William Done labour respectively, to Hampstead with John McKenny, and to other suburbs of the metropolis. Gratifying work is also done in the other large centres, like Birmingham, Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds, and Glasgow.

Our remarks would not be adequate without some allusion to what Methodism is doing for the army and navy. We have efficient missionary ministers in all the important stations—at the Aldershot Camp, John Thompson; the Colchester Garrison, Ralph Green; the Woolwich Garrison, W. J. Heaton; at Chatham Garrison, John Burgess; Shorncliffe,

Edward Sinzininex; Dover, John Vercoe; Portsmouth, H. E. Thompson; Gosport, W. H. Cave, Parkhurst, Joseph Heaton; Netley Hospital, George Raynell; Dublin, James Tobias; the Curragh Camp, Gibson MacMillen; at Malta, Joseph Webster and John W. Hartley. At several of the stations mentioned remarkable results have followed.

We briefly conclude this chapter with the observation, that whilst our cursory and incomplete survey of the mission enterprise affords encouragement and gratification, much more remains to be done ere the Methodists of England can say their duty is accomplished. They have resources for a larger work. They have done well in the foreign field, but the Society must receive greater support if it is to push forward the evangelization of the heathen world, and make its own power the measure of its responsibilities. We would speak with even more urgency of the heathen fields at home. Here there is a loud call for increased agency. A great opportunity is offered to such a body as the Wesleyans in the streets and lanes of the large centres. Unless something better be speedily attempted, here too, duty will not be commensurate with power.

CHAPTER VII.

THE SOCIAL FEATURES IN THE WESLEYAN CHURCH.

WE have long thought that the social aspects of the Methodist organization are well worth study. There is probably no body of Christians that come into closer contact with each other. The class meeting, the three years' system of ministerial changes, the numerous public meetings for connexional purposes, the great foreign missionary enterprise with its almost countless gatherings, all these have contributed to form relationships that have affected the body spiritually in a large degree. The changes, too, in the pulpit Sunday after Sunday have made up a large social element to be added to those we have mentioned. In this way the interchange of ideas has been frequent, and whilst it has disadvantages there can be no doubt that this complicated system of change has led up to immense moral and spiritual results. An earnest Methodist, one who enters enthusiastically into all the affairs of his church, is in many respects a rare type of man. There is a fulness of sympathy in his nature, an overflowing generosity that marks him out as a lovable person. He comes into contact with different men—with innumerable phases of mind—he hears what they have to say, he unconsciously reflects their

better qualities, and becomes himself a centre of genial influence. Perhaps this is not found to be universally the case, but it is undoubtedly the genius of Methodism to work in this particular way.

Those who have read the lives of the early preachers, and particularly the *Life and Times of Jackson*, must have been struck by the influences exerted in numberless ways through the rapid successive social changes through which these men passed. It is no exaggeration to say that a Wesleyan gentlemen of ordinary capacities and intelligence has a more extensive acquaintance with the ministry of his own church, than an English churchman, or a Baptist, or an Independent has of his. No member of the Methodist community can take up the *Recorder*, the *Watchman*, or the *Methodist*, without finding something that will touch his heart or awaken the associations of his moral and mental nature; and if he looks from the right point of view he will find a source of strength in every incident related, in every little thing that bears upon his own past history. A short record of some district or quarterly meeting brings a crowd of associations, some of them doubtless tinged with sadness, some lit up with the illumination of rapture, but not one without a spiritual meaning. Even the names of the dead live in a perpetual inspiration. We think not only of Wesley and the early pioneers, but those of later days come into our presence as patterns of excellence and of devotion. Some will have a rushing memory at the mention of Dr. Hannah, some at Thomas Jackson, at Luke Wiseman, and Samuel Romily Hall, Thomas Vasey, Dr. Waddy, George T. Perks, Charles Prest, and George Maunder; for these men, and

others who have occupied prominent positions in the Church, have been stationed in many of the greatest centres of England, after spending their earlier career in the villages.

It is within the limits of strict truth to say that the singular development of the Methodist organization has united, as with a strange net-work, the whole of the villages and towns in England. The constant movement of the preachers acquaints one town more or less with the religious life of another. The itinerant carries with him not only his own library, and his old sermons, but a bundle of associations that are of engrossing interest in his new sphere. Methodism yearly presents a steady panorama of social and religious incident, the culminating scene of which is the assembling of the Conference, now held in this town, now in that. One year this body gathers at Newcastle, in another at London, and all the centres get the benefit periodically of what may be termed the whole life of Methodism gathered into one focus. On these occasions veteran preachers meet, and exchange views not only in the deliberations of the ecclesiastical court, but in the home circle, in some old and revered family whose guests they are. Here the social aspects of Methodism are perhaps seen to the best advantage. For it cannot be doubted that the presence of hundreds of ministers in hundreds of homes, men who have come from all quarters of the globe, must have a powerful result for good. These assemblies are valuable not only on their spiritual side. There are other aspects to be looked at. The extensive travel, which is the inevitable heritage of every Wesleyan preacher, must prove of advantage both to

him and the Connexion. An experience thus gained, if well marked and digested, has many uses. It ought to make him a desirable accession into the numerous social circles he is called in the course of his itinerant work to enter. And thus we see what a power the living men have as an interpenetrating element in the daily life of the Methodist Church. These laws of association, which are in some respects peculiar to this Church, invite special study. The social aspects of Methodism have done more, perhaps, than we think to shape its spiritual existence.

Reflection on these things might to many be a rich harvest of genuine emotion, not the spurious and dangerous emotion of the sensational novel, but a real uplifting of the tides of the spirit. There is a cry just now in some quarters for a more concentrated observation in relation to the education of the young. It is contended, and wisely too, that if the observant faculties were better trained the education of the youth of our country would be ultimately more effective and useful. As grown-up men and women —people who have passed through a long range of experience—would not great good result from a constant reflection upon our varied and manifold associations gathered in the course of our lives? Helmholtz says: "In addition to the knowledge which the student of science requires from lectures and books, he requires intelligence, which only an ample and diligent perception can give him; he needs skill, which comes only by repeated experiment and long practice. His senses must be sharpened by long kinds of observation, to detect minute differences of form, colour, solidity, smell, &c., in the object under

examination ; his hand must be equally trained to the work of the blacksmith, the locksmith, the carpenter or the draughtsman, and the violin-player ; and when operating with the microscope must surpass the lace-maker in delicacy of handling the needle."* May we not apply some such remarks as these to the point we have endeavoured to illustrate ?

The field over which an average aged Methodist is called to throw his memory is and must be in many cases a large and a very varied one. He has multiplied lessons to learn from the workings of Divine Providence, from frequent experience of change. Unlike the Presbyterians in Scotland, he has not to mourn the loss of one pastor in twenty, or it may be thirty years, but he will probably be called to think of the passing away of a spiritual teacher ten times in that period, and in some instances more than that. But apart from death, there are numerous other contingencies which all bear a meaning. There are family bereavements, emigration to foreign lands, social changes in many domestic circles, marriages, successes in business, defeats and disasters, which come more or less within his knowledge. No doubt the members of all denominations have a similar experience, but the almost perpetual shiftings of the ecclesiastical and religious scene in Methodism provide variety and give intensity to its life, investing it with peculiar lessons, and giving deep meaning to all its associations. Out of Methodism in its enthusiastic aspects you get a robust and fine social, as well as religious, life. It presents abundant materials out of which spiritual characters are made, moulded,

* Helmholtz's *Lectures on Science.*

chastened, and purified by the Divine touch. Is it not then of vast consequence that these materials should be used rightly? The Berlin correspondent of the *Times* recently described some marvellous feats performed by a painter in the German capital. The writer said :—"Though this is the age of statistics, it is likewise the era of steam, of work at high pressure, of competition with the lightnings. It has been reserved to a modern Child of the South to show what can be achieved in the way of kindling the canvas into varied and instantaneous life, as if by the magic touch of the electric light. In the artistic world here of late no slight flutter has been caused by the appearance of Signor Carlo, described as a concert-painter, though the name at first sight will doubtless puzzle your readers. Concert-painter! What can that mean? An artist who executes a picture in concert with another, after the manner of Beaumont and Fletcher, of Erckmann and Chatrian? No! One who paints Arcadian scenery to enhance the effect of pastoral songs? Wide of the mark! A gentleman of the brush distinguished from his brothers by the laborious care with which he devises, or concerts, his pictures beforehand? The very opposite. It is an artist, in fact, who, without a moment's previous thought or warning, standing on the stage of a concert-hall, and having his subject suddenly prescribed to him by one of the audience, will dash off his work in almost less time than it would take to photograph it—a lightning-limner, a painter-*improvisatore*. Every evening at a popular place of amusement here he mounts the stage, and to the sound of slow music charms the audience by a

rapid and simultaneous display of the sister art. His performance is afterwards given away by lot. His subject being suggested to him, the little dark-hued man, of true artistic type, with a general aspect of careless desolation, immediately seizes his brush without a moment's apparent reflection, and with intense interest the spectators watch the swift and gradual process which transforms a blank extent of canvas into a gorgeous wreck-strewn sea or a golden sunset. His work is generally finished within the hour. Not long ago, being the guest of the Grand Duke of Mecklenburg-Schwerin at Ludwigslust, Signor Carlo was desired to paint in oil a Hungarian landscape (Pussta, with gipsy camp), and this he did in the space of 50 minutes, with such truth to nature and such artistic skill as to excite the hearty admiration of all the Court. Before a society of artists lately, too, this wonderful man, within the short period of 43 minutes, called into glowing life an Italian evening landscape with a perspective of classic ruins, glancing rivulets, and breathing groves. To cartoon the same subject occupied him slightly over a quarter of an hour. In view of the conditions under which his pictures are produced, they are certainly wonderful examples of artistic skill, and must rank the author with those peculiar prodigies of mental and physical achievement wherein the 19th century is so rife."

If the Christian mind were concentrated as firmly upon the materials to which we have referred what splendid moral visions might not be realised. Half of the materials furnished by the spiritual consciousness lie aside unused ; half of the suggestions

of our better nature are allowed to pass as idle dreams, when they might be seized and lifted into the reality of active life. We too often look for outward teachers when there is a great schoolmaster within us, daily waiting to give us the best of all lessons. Blinded by passion, selfishness, and sin, asleep in indifference, we fail to reap the harvest that is in our own souls.

> We might be all,
> We dream of, happy, high majestical.
> Where is the beauty, love, and truth we seek,
> But in our minds.

Visions of moral excellence may be seen by the wayside, if we would only turn aside and look. A Methodist is continually hearing of change and vicissitude in the great community to which he belongs, not change in doctrine or Church Government, but in the far stretching social relationships of the people. The class meeting, though mainly designed for purely spiritual objects, has yet a decided social cast. Each member listens to the experience of his neighbour. This weekly record of joy or of sorrow often recounts the vicissitudes of domestic life—all kinds of mental anguish, affliction, and bereavement. Those, therefore, in danger of lapsing into spiritual idleness or indifference by reason of luxury and ease, are reminded of their duties when some tale of sorrow or of death is related in their presence. Thus the Methodist is never without the materials out of which a strong religious experience is constructed. Let him train his Spiritual eye to view these things

aright, to look at them through the medium of the Divine illumination, which is never withheld, and fresh thoughts will come to him, his motives will rise to a loftier platform and work through a wider and more ennobling sphere.

The subscription lists of the Thanksgiving Fund will, viewed in such a way, become something infinitely more precious than a bare record of pounds and shillings. There is no more eloquent document in the whole range of Methodist literature. Let the hearts of those who have looked at it week after week answer to this. The variety of its expression is amazing. There are few of the columns that do not afford abundant materials for quiet thought and reflection. How many, within the last few months, have had their memories refreshed whilst they have scanned the lists by the fireside. Some of the items have taken us back in recollection to men and women who have passed to the skies. It would not, indeed, be spiritually-minded people who would charge us with exaggeration, if we said in a moment of exuberance that the Thanksgiving Fund had led to a higher communion with our departed friends. The lists are noteworthy for the names of many ministers who were known throughout the country and remarkable alike for talent and piety. Some have given for fathers and mothers in heaven, some for children there, others for faithful servants, many for special blessings and the watchings of a gracious Providence. Nothing but a careful perusal of the register in connection with this Fund can give an adequate idea of the countless associations which it has revived. Apart from the financial objects of the scheme it

ought, and we doubt not will, give a stimulus to every agency in Methodist work. Best of all it will demonstrate to the outside world that the Wesleyan community have not been immersed in the spirit of selfishness which has taken hold of the age, and threatens to hold it in bondage. Giving lies at the very root of Christianity. It was the great manifestation in Christ's character. The man that has no heart for giving robs himself of the highest delights of being. In proportion to the sacrifice or the self-denial is the rapture of soul, which in its turn acts and reacts on the whole round of the affections with an elevating influence.

In the organ of another denomination, a writer thus speaks of the Thanksgiving Fund:—"It is due to the Methodist ministry, to say that they have led the whole Connexion in this expression of gratitude with a spirit which does them great honour. The very first contribution on the list last issued runs thus, 'An Aged Supernumerary, £24.'; and this is but one of many handsome gifts from ministers, old and young, married and single, together with the children of the former. In some instances, when, perhaps, the possession of private property made the difference, ministers and ministerial families have sent in princely gifts; but, in general, these sums, rising from tens to hundreds and from hundreds to thousands, have naturally proceeded from laymen and lay families in the enjoyment of ample fortunes or of large profits from commerce or manufactures. Nor is it less than marvellous, whether we speak of tens, hundreds, or thousands, that so much liberality should have been shown in this time of stagnation

and distress. In one case, for example, a gentleman who had already given one thousand pounds for general purposes added the magnificent sum of nine thousand pounds 'for an orphanage'; while, at the lower end of the scale, there may be noticed such items as 'Sergeant and Mrs. Kerrison, two pounds,' and 'Private William Davidson, 30th Regiment, ten shillings,' which may be regarded as a truly thankful and well-earned acknowledgment of the 'army work' which the Conference instituted years ago, and which has been prosecuted with a degree of success that has drawn warm recognition, not only from the commanders of regiments, but also from general officers of the highest rank.

"One very striking and interesting feature in this 'Thanksgiving Fund' is the wide range taken among the donors by the sentiment which dominates the movement. Many of the gifts are characterised as '*In memoriam*' simply, but a large number are in memory of fathers and mothers, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters 'now in heaven,' some of which may be rather quaintly expressed, but all in a touching manner, such as 'five children gone home and five living,' 'dear sainted mother,' 'godly mothers (of husband and wife) in heaven,' 'in memory of Methodist parents,' and so forth. There are also 'thank offerings for family blessings,' for 'God's mercies,' for 'sparing and saving grace' for 'blessings received since Christmas, 1877,' for 'chastening mercies,' and for 'constant mercies,' for 'special deliverance in a recent railway collision,' from 'one who realises Ephesians ii. 13' (which speaks of those who 'sometimes were far off' but 'made nigh

by the blood of Christ'), for 'special help in time of need,' for 'God's care,' for 'restored health'; to which might be added many instances like 'In gratitude for the Methodist ministry of the last two years,' and 'For the great success of the late revival.' Probably, if former lists were searched, they would afford other instances of sympathy beyond the bounds of the Connexion, like one which we observed in the latest issued, 'A Congregationalist, one pound.' But the most signal result that an examination of the whole series would yield would be the productive power of those chords of connexional, personal, and family sympathy, which have been so distinctly struck and so universally responded to.*

This Thanksgiving Fund then touches deeply the whole social life of the Church. But there are other considerations that fall to be viewed in this chapter. Who, amid the tranquillity of an evening hour, has not reverted to the conversations of earlier years; we mean those delightful talks that took place by the winter fireside when the Methodist preacher told stories of the burning and shining lights of other days, when *Wesley's Journals* were recommended for perusal, and Watson's *Sermons and Institutes*, and the biography of the saintly Fletcher of Madeley. That was a time, too, when we noted all the good things said about the popular living men in London, in Liverpool, in Manchester, Leeds, and elsewhere. It was then, too, that the noble mission enterprise was brought before our view, and great thoughts of self-sacrifice arose. Those were the times of

* *Nonconformist.*

holy vows and pure ambitions. Those were the seasons when many of the best men were led to think of the ministry. Then probably religious biography had the strongest charms, and did much towards the shaping of future character. Under the circumstances we speak of, the Methodist ministers were a great power for good in the homes of England. The very memory of the hours spent with them has saved many a youth from the downward road. It is customary in the Methodist as well as in other churches to examine annually the statistics of the membership, and thus to arrive at an estimate of the good the Church has accomplished. But it is often forgotten that a religious community exerts far reaching influences that no statistics can tabulate. What may be called the negative influence of Methodism has been of great consequence in modern life. The teaching unconsciously received—perhaps often unconsciously administered—in the domestic circle, has acted in the after years with repressive force against the stream of evil tendency rushing upon our youths amid the fitful and dazzling glare of city life. Thousands who have not been brought into active work in the church, have at least been saved from working actively for the devil. This is a positive gain to society, though it does not swell the roll of church membership. Remembering, therefore, how potent for good the influence of the Methodist social circle may be, it is seemly that parents, and above all ministers, should guard the sanctity of the influences that may grow in this fertile sphere. Let not the inner current of Methodist social life, so great a power in years gone by, take on the taint of the evils

of modern society. Let not the tone of the social circle be lowered by frivolous conversation, by weak jesting, by feeble satire upon religious things, by laughing at old customs, at the mode of living which made the Methodist forerunners the salt of the earth, and gave them a title to be considered "the bravest of the brave," but who now dwell in "other heavens than those that we behold," and

> Take their fill
> Of deep and liquid rest, forgetful of all ill.*

It strikes us very forcibly that there was less of what is called criticism practised in other days. There was an all comprehending, all embracing generosity, a heartiness of faith and trust, that we do not always find in these times. We were willing to believe the best of all men. We sought earnestly for and noted every good quality a man possessed, and did not fasten with leech-like tenacity upon every little defect or weakness. A supreme charity ruled us, not as with a rod of iron, but as an angel of light. We had less fault to find with sermons in those days, and consequently the preachers were borne up as on eagles' wings. They felt the full confidence reposed in them, and they walked into the pulpits with firm step, being met immediately with a glow of warmth from the congregation which gave them steady faith. A trusting audience wins half the battle for the minister.

Mr. Spurgeon lately complained of a class he styled "the professional grumblers." It is to be feared that these grumblers sometimes find their way into the

* Shelley's *Adonais.*

social circles of the church. There, it must be admitted they do a great deal of mischief. Now in the Wesleyan body exceptional means are afforded for the criticisms of ministerial character. We believe this subject to be of vast importance, and we hesitate not to approach it, however delicate it may be. Let it be understood that we do not here refer to moral character. That matter is so secure in the hands of the Conference that none need trouble themselves about it. But next to a man's moral character his intellectual character is dear to him. Let us here also say that we are not afraid of fair and open comment upon the intellectual character of the ministry. As a whole it will hold its own side by side with any other body in respect to the great essentials of preaching. Elsewhere we have tabulated our view on this point. The Methodists have never made any boast of their learning or scholarship, because they have higher work in hand: they have never talked on the housetops about their great literary acquirements because neither the time nor the money has been at command to enable them to produce a literature commensurate with that issuing from the English Church clergy. Yet it may be claimed that the Wesleyan ministry has done its duty as well as any other in this country. It has perceived where it ought to direct its energies, and a practical understanding of affairs has led it almost instinctively to the cultivation of those things that win genuine spiritual success. Some of the ministers might have entered the controversial field, many of them are fitted for polemics, but in relation to the stirring discussions of our time, they have on the whole adopted the sentiment so well expressed by one of the most chaste writers of our day,

though he belongs to a very different school of theological thought. He says:—

"To heal the broken unity of Christendom, the scholar may rely on the ultimate establishment of his critical results; the ecclesiast may plan treaties of peace and fusions of doctrine between church and church; but meanwhile those who find it more congenial to pass behind the whole field of theological divergency, and linger near the common springs of all human piety and hope may perhaps be preparing some first lines of a true *Eirenikon*."*

But to return to our point. What we wish to object to is the indiscriminate and loose way in which preachers are sometimes criticised in the social circle. Criticism is perhaps not the proper name for it. It is often composed of mere intellectual crudities. But it is nevertheless mischievous, and has generally a two-fold influence. It first acts injuriously upon the spiritual life of those who talk; and secondly, younger people listening gather disjointed views of preaching, and what is worse their minds are often prejudiced against the men best fitted to do them good. We saw a splendid rebuke administered in a Methodist home one night. Some ladies and gentlemen at the tea-table began to discuss the qualities of the circuit ministers. The question at issue was purely one of their respective preaching capabilities. Some young people were present. "Stop," cried the host, "if you go on much longer you'll destroy that man's character. You have nearly taken it away already." We never saw anything more effective. How many of us, like Penelope, only with a very

* Martineau's *Discourses* (*Preface*).

different motive, undo the work at night which we have done in the morning! At best we are foolish creatures, for we often by a single stroke destroy or shatter the moral and spiritual structure which it has cost us many anxious and resolute hours to build. Alas! how many preachers have had their pulpit-teaching partially destroyed by the loose talk of drawing-rooms. To estimate its effect upon the young would be wholly impossible. How much better themes we can find for our drawing-rooms! How much nobler objects for the enjoyment of the social hours! If the preachers are to be the subject of discussion, why not set ourselves to find out their good qualities? If the same vigilance were employed in searching for merit, pure motive, and righteous endeavour, as that employed in seeking to discover some eccentricity of manner, some trifling flaw in the discourse, what a richer harvest of good would be realised in the social circle. But many destroy their influence by the superfluity of their talk, by the narrow range of their sympathies, by the self-imposed task of carping over small matters, and by the total overthrow of that effort of mind and heart which is ever willing to recognise the essential elements of good that may be in a man.

The field of the Christian ministry is one for the exercise of large sympathy, for the most tender consideration of weaknesses. It would assist powerfully the preaching of the gospel if, in the social relationship of the Church, those whom we listen to Sunday after Sunday were to be upheld for such qualities as they possess, and not run down for their defects, real or supposed. The influence of the social circle is far reaching, and

it would be a public benefit if it were considered in its results upon pulpit teaching. It is the duty of the heads of families to see that nothing is said in the family circle derogatory to the Christian ministry. The future well-being of their children may be more largely depending upon this than they imagine. Mr. Matthew Arnold points out that one of the great virtues in Charles Kingsley was his generous recognition of the better part of every man. Mr. Arnold says:—"There was one thing in which Kingsley seemed to me unique, and I desire to speak of that above all other things. I think he was the most generous man I have ever known, the most forward to praise what he thought good, the most willing to admire, the most free from all thought of himself in praising and in admiring, and the most incapable of being made ill-natured or even indifferent by having to support ill-natured attacks himself."*

The danger to which we have thus alluded is perhaps increased by the pernicious literature of the day, which is admitted into many families professedly Christian. There is a species of literature in great demand just now, which is in many respects calculated to blunt the edge of the better susceptibilities of religious households. A novel is indispensable in many quarters where we might expect to find better reading. We do not presume to quarrel with the higher class of fictions, in which instruction is combined with amusement, but this, it is to be feared, would not be considered the leading feature in numbers of novels that may be seen in the hands of the youth of the present age, and in the social circles of

* *Life of Kingsley*, vol. ii., p. 471.

Methodism. Unwholesome fictions are issuing from the press in shoals. The pernicious character of these publications is not glaringly exhibited as is the case in some of the earlier objectionable tales. Religion is now made the material out of which certain novels are constructed ; and because of this, Christian parents admit them to their homes. The modern sensational tale has acted with almost revolutionary force upon the nobler instincts of the religious mind. Its breath has been fatal to the growth of many a fair aspiration, many a fine motive and endeavour. A course of such reading in the social circle is a bad preparation for the ministrations from the pulpit. What is called the fashionable novel does not pave the way for a sympathetic appreciation of expositions on the epistles of the New Testament. But apart from the moral, or rather the immoral furniture of such books, there is a disposition shown in not a few of them to brand religion with the name of cant, and to represent professions of religion as mere hypocrisy practised for selfish ends. Though having a great admiration for the genius of Dickens, and sympathising with his fine attacks on great social abuses, we have never been amongst those who could extol in a Methodist drawing-room his more exaggerated caricatures on the ministry. The tendency to enjoy such caricatures is perhaps too apparent, even in Methodist social life, and here as in other matters we go from small things to greater. The influence of the novel is amazing. It has become a great element in modern society, and judging from the signs that are open to our eyes it is likely to become still larger in the sweep of its influence. A too careful consideration,

therefore, cannot be bestowed upon a subject that winds itself into the inner currents of our daily life, and either fits or unfits our sons and daughters for the free and unobstructed reception of that truth which is of the first magnitude and importance.

Speaking for ourselves we confess that we have no disposition to condemn all fictions, or to advocate the extinction of this kind of literature. We look upon the novel as capable of being made a great vehicle of truth. It gives opportunity for the exercise of imaginative talent, and in wise hands, it may subserve the noblest purposes. Some of the greatest writers have discovered in the novel the field best suited for the exercise of their genius. A writer who has dealt ably with this subject tells us that "there are no symptoms yet that the novel is about to lose its popularity as a form of literature. On the contrary there is every symptom that in one shape or another it will continue to be popular for a long time, and that more and more talent will flow into it. The novel has been becoming more real and determinate, in so far as it can convey matters of fact more earnest, in so far as it can be made a vehicle for matters of speculation, and more conscious at the same time of its ability in all matters of phantasy. What is this but saying that its capabilities have been increasing simultaneously as regards each of the three kinds of intellectual exercises which make up the total of literature—history, philosophy and poetry; and what is this again but saying that in future there may be either a greater disposition among those who naturally distribute themselves according to this threefold classification, to employ it

for their several purposes, or a greater desire among those who are peculiarly novelists to push its powers in the threefold service?"*

It may safely be inferred that the novel will continue to influence us in a large, and probably in an increasingly large degree. Such being the case it becomes the members of the Christian communities to set their faces against the bad types of imaginative literature. There can be no doubt that a good deal of carelessness exists in regard to this matter. We do not desire to reproduce the several forms of the Puritan mind, but, what a great writer has called the anti-Puritanism of Dickens, need not win our full assent. Dickens did a great service to his time by attacking social abuses, and his works are in the main healthy. Still we must not be carried too far by his anti-Puritan spirit. An author, whose name is in everybody's mouth at the present moment, has just reminded us in clear and vigorous language of the better side of the Puritan spirit. Mr. John Richard Green, in an historical work of rare labour and rarer ability, says, "As soon as the wild orgie of the Restoration was over men began to see that nothing that was really worthy in the work of Puritanism had been undone. The revels of Whitehall, the scepticism and debauchery of courtiers, the corruption of statesmen, left the mass of Englishmen what Puritanism had made them, serious, earnest, sober in life and conduct, firm in their love of Protestantism and of freedom. In the revolution of 1688, Puritanism did the work of civil liberty which it had failed to do in that of of 1642. It wrought out through Wesley and the revival of the eighteenth

* Masson's *British Novelists*, p. 321.

century the work of religious reform which its earlier efforts had only thrown back for a hundred years. Slowly but steadily it introduced its own seriousness and purity into English society, English literature, English politics. The history of English progress since the Restoration, on its moral and spiritual sides, has been the history of Puritanism."*

In the varied elements that make up our social life some observant men would not hesitate to say that we had gone a long way from Puritanism. The question is whether we have not crossed the line too far. We are not likely to err on the severer side of life. Modern literature, especially imaginative literature has sought to make life amusing rather than grave. An attempt has been made to afford us pleasure by superficial and often objectional means. Many writers make it their aim to drive out all thought from their books, all serious matters, all that would tax the intellectual powers. Consequently incidents of a pleasing description have to be sought. The one aim is to amuse, not to inspire; to provide a means of killing time, not a source of life that will grow and fertilize in a larger range of action. The result is that the divorce court, with its revolting records, is made the staple of some of the books that are permitted to cross the Christian threshold, and the blue and green volumes sometimes lie side by side with the epistles of St. Paul, and sometimes have not even the company of a good book. We have seen this in some Methodist homes.

The social life of religious people is also more or less affected by the species of journal called the "Society

* *History of the English People*, vol. iii., p. 321,

journal." This is a new element in modern life. Such organs are becoming more numerous, and it is admitted by the ablest journalists that this is a kind of literature wholly unworthy the support and patronage of the heads of Christian families. Gossip is the material out of which the "Society journal" is manufactured. It is often gossip, too, for which there is believed to be little foundation in fact. The taste for scandal concerning royalty and the aristocracy is not only fostered but in great measure created by the "Society" journalists. Where incidents are scarce and no sensation can be aroused, there appears to be no difficulty in manufacturing incidents. Half the stories recorded in these weekly budgets of scandal are exaggerated or untrue. A great critic has said that the public should with respect to all that it reads, carefully consider the objects of the writers. We have no difficulty in arriving at a proper conclusion in the case now before us. The whole object is to amuse, to dazzle, to astonish, but the amusement is produced at an immense cost. It is often produced at the sacrifice of some one's character. At all events the writers succeed in raising suspicion with reference to people who do not fairly come within the pale of the descriptive writing to which we are treated in "Society journals" every week. Apart from all this there is the lack of the great virtue of seeking the elevation of the people. The journals under review weaken rather than strengthen the moral nature. It is extremely doubtful whether they strengthen in any degree the intellect, which all good literature ought to do.

Clearly, then, it is the duty of those who have it in their power to mould the life of the family, to induce

the young into paths sound and pure, to lift a protest against this sort of literature. The fair growth of religious principle will be choked if it be permitted to come into the domestic circle. In the Wesleyan Church we have handed down many traditions of the excellence and the purity of the forefathers. All the literature that the Wesleyans have is pure: every book that proceeds from their book-room is issued with a view to immediate good. Let the gentlemen of the Methodist Church substitute their own excellent biographical works for the tawdry, sentimental, often untrue gossip that is falling on many a family with a withering breath, and which is poisoning the very roots of society.

It does not seem certain, moreover, that the daily journals are exactly what they should be. On the whole our newspaper press is a great and beneficial agency, mirroring the world at our breakfast tables every morning. It is conducted with an amazing amount of intellect and enterprise. Nothing seems to be spared in order to make this agency the wonder of the age. But whilst feeling grateful for its information, its instruction, its influence, and we may say its genius, there are some of the daily journals that might be improved. On this subject we will quote an extract from Mr. Miall, himself a practical journalist and an energetic writer. Though not adopting his opinion in full, we believe the following expresses an important truth, and throws out a suggestion well worth the consideration of the wealthy laymen of this country.

"I ask any religious man to watch the tendency of an influential section of the press. Its tendency I

am bound to predict will be felt to be something like this. He will be tempted to look at all the great realities of life as matters which it is lawful to play with as convenience may dictate. Whatever veneration for truth he may entertain will gradually become less sensitive, and he will come to consider lying, as theft was considered by the Spartans, to be infamous only when done in a bungling style. He will perceive in himself a disposition to sneer at all the sterner exemplifications of virtue, to accept calumny as naturally due to heroism, to make light of moral principles when they stand in the way of party objects, to disbelieve in human magnanimity, to make grimaces at all the grander passages in a people's history, to smile most obsequiously upon what the gospel condemns, and jest most mockingly at what the gospel enforces. In short, if he were to yield himself up to the full effect of the deleterious atmosphere with which such journals would surround him, he would sink into a talker upon all conceivable subjects, without faith, without heart, without conscience, without a single object before him, or guiding principle within him, to make his talent subservient to man's elevation. Now what must the effect of this be on unreflecting and irreligious minds, more especially when it is very commonly reflected, though but dimly, by the lesser organs of opinion. For my own part I often wonder that it has not been more pernicious than it seems to have been. I attribute it to the distinguishing mercy of God, and to the resisting power of vital Christianity, even in its feebleness, that journalism here has not brought us down to the degraded level of the people of France,

amongst whom public virtue is believed to be an unrealisable fiction, and public crime nothing worse than a blunder; and that all trust in the true and the good, the disinterested and the holy, the moral and the divine, has not been washed away by the incessant streams of selfish, sordid, sceptical but gentle utilitarianism which are propelled by our newspaper press through the public mind."

And as an antidote to this state of affairs, it is suggested that a daily newspaper should be started upon the broad principles of Christianity, in which all topics might be dealt with as the friends of righteousness, truth, peace, love, and God would wish them to be dealt with. "Facts worth noting, honestly narrated, principles worth holding faithfully adhered to, public objects worth seeking steadily pursued, surely an organ proposing this high aim to itself, employing high talent, permeated by a religious spirit, and conducted by business capacities, ought not to be looked upon as a dream never to be realised, or as a project devoid of all chances of success. Such a journal would speedily shame its rivals into the recognition of a purer code of morality, and become the centre of a much healthier tone of public spirit. The advantages to the cause of the gospel in this country would transcend all present calculation. It would act upon society as a change of mind or season."*

Now there is much in this restless age of ours to call our minds away from the due consideration of the changes that cross our path. It is an age of bustle, of hurried newspaper reading, of strong party

* Miall's *British Churches*, p. 454.

strife, of exciting politics, of stir in theological matters, of dangerous open onslaughts, and of still more dangerous covert attacks against religious truth. A great writer has told us that "old leisure is dead, and declared to have perished amid the shock of revolutions, the press of democratic feet, the fever of controversy, and the rush to be rich."

Quæ regio in terris nostri non plena laboris.

We need to watch the instincts of social life, the tendencies of society. To the members of the Wesleyan Church is given a wide heritage of religious associations. Let the young especially take care how they use the influences with which they have been surrounded from the nursery, let them seek to perpetuate them, and to give force to the richest traditions handed down to them. They will then make the social life of the Methodist Church what it should be, a powerful ally of the ministry in working out the higher functions of the Body, and thus giving a tone in the future, as has been done in the past, to the great current of English life.

CHAPTER VIII.

A FORECAST.

NO member or adherent of the Wesleyan Church can be insensible to the future. And perhaps an inquiry into the probable state of that Church in the years that are to come never assumed a greater importance. The Thanksgiving Fund, commemorating as it does the introduction of laymen into the Conference, marks a far reaching change in its ecclesiastical history, but it was a change brought about with a calmness of temper which we take to be the presage of tranquillity. This change may doubtless be the harbinger of others, but into such speculative questions we desire not meanwhile to pry. We are confident, however, that whilst the Methodist Church adapts itself to new exigencies in the future it will do so in the spirit of tranquil wisdom, and not in the turbulence of ecclesiastical passion. At present there are no apparent signs of restlessness amongst the Wesleyan community, no sense of that dissatisfaction, which seeks expression in a revolution against dogma or so-called religious tyranny, or in an attempt to overturn the fixed form of church government. This is very grati-

fying, especially to those more concerned with the spirituality of the people than about some utopia of ecclesiastical freedom.

The inference we draw from the existing state of affairs is that the Methodist Church is eminently fitted to begin a grander work than has hitherto been attempted. The Thanksgiving Fund may be presumed to have prepared—taking it in its spiritual aspects—the hearts of many for the reception of a more extended and more vigorous life, for a diviner glow of health and spiritual force.

It would be folly to affect to believe, apart from all this, that there are not dangers hard by which the Wesleyan must take into account in any estimate of the Church's future. But before referring to these dangers in any detail, we wish to notice some other matters.

An opinion prevails, in certain quarters, that the next change that the Methodists will have to witness will be an extension of the three years' system as regards the appointment of the itinerant preachers. Just now there is no agitation on the question, and it is doubtful whether any band of ministers would care to raise it hurriedly to the platform of fierce discussion. We are led to believe that several influential men are in favour of the scheme. Dr. Rigg, in a very able and adequate chapter, in his recently published work, *Connexional Economy of Methodism*, deals with this subject. He advocates itinerancy as opposed to a fixed ministry, and we must confess that he has said some conclusive things. We agree with him in his general argument, though we think that he is not quite accurate in his view of the disadvantages of a preacher, who has to labour for years in one place. He points

out that monotony and formality are likely to be the result of long residences in one locality. There are notable examples to the contrary in the great Presbyterian churches of Scotland, where many men have attained to a remarkable vigour of mind, and variety of view and thought, whilst ministering to the same congregations. The rush of life, the rapid course of events, the turbulent experience of the modern mind, afford everywhere material for observation and study. But we do not desire to pursue this point further, because it is our conviction that in regard to the main question now under consideration, we are at one with Dr. Rigg. On coming to the conclusion of his chapter we were pleased to find the following:—"Whether or not, in the case of *superintendents*, especially in the large towns, and after they have fulfilled a respectable term of service, it might be well for them, if wished by the people, to continue for a longer period than three years in the same circuit, is a point on which we are not called to pronounce an opinion. Our argument is general. We advocate itinerancy as opposed to a fixed ministry; and we are convinced that the latter when weighed in the balances will be found wanting."*

Dr. Rigg does not in this passage express his opinion the one way or the other, but we hope we do not misconstrue his meaning when we take him to be favourable to a modification, or alteration of the existing rule, in the direction indicated in the quotation we have made. This being so it may be asked why an extension of time in the case of superintendents in the large towns may not also be extended to other

* *Connexional Economy of Methodism*, p. 86.

ministers and to other places. Let it be understood that we do not contend for an entire reversion of the established rule. What we wish to see is a general modification, perhaps to the extent of enabling a preacher in all places to remain six or eight years, subject to the sanction of the people. In the case of young men just beginning their probation, the present law might perhaps be wisely retained. Whatever may be done in this matter it would, in our view, be well if yearly changes at least could be abandoned or discountenanced. The expenses involved in such changes must be considerable. But that is not the chief objection. The preacher who remains only a year in one place, can scarcely do more than fit himself to the groove of duty before he has to think of another sphere of labour. These yearly changes have a twofold effect, and we think in many cases an injurious effect. The assumption that if the preacher is not suitable he can be removed in one year, sometimes generates a prejudice against him ere he has been properly tried. Yet of all the positions that we know, none need more sympathy than that which finds a young and inexperienced Methodist preacher face to face with a people for the first time. Instead of the shadow of uncertainty or doubt as to his length of stay, he ought to be borne up on the tides of confidence and reciprocal trust. Not for one moment would we forget the great kindness of the Methodist congregations to their pastors. In no case we believe is a voluntary injustice inflicted, but the system is calculated to engender in some cases the lack of that practice that would see a man fairly tested ere a resolution is arrived at to dispense with him. Our

meaning will be understood without further remark on this head.

Again, the man who is often on the move is in danger of repeating his old sermons. It is by steady exertion and concentrated effort that the intellectual nature can be expanded. To be compelled to preach before the same congregation for a series of years will strengthen a man rather than weaken him, for it will send him back repeatedly upon his own mind for fresh thought. It involves a more vigorous effort of the mental nature, and just in proportion as that nature is exercised will it grow strong. It is given to us all to work under every condition. Periods of ease and tranquillity have their injurious effects on the intellectual as well as on the moral character. We are so weak and so unwise that we need to be driven sometimes. Compulsion may be a hard task-master, but it eventually brings the breath of blessing in its track. As it is the most difficult battle-fields that develop the greatest military genius so it is the strait to which man is reduced that frequently discloses his highest excellences. Necessity, with its refreshing blessings and Divine breath, must bear down upon us all in order to the maturing of our nature both moral and intellectual. The strongest men are those that are put into circumstances of the greatest trial. The sermon written a year ago is no part of the life of to-day.

A new day beckons to a newer shore.

The author has outlived it; his experience has grown beyond it. He may use it as a vehicle to carry his freshened thoughts, and the deeper truths he has gathered

by the wayside. But if he attempt to strut the same form of words up and down the country, one of two things is certain. Either he will have no spiritual grasp of his people, or he has not assimilated the maturer experience of years to the Divine life that ought to give energy to his pulpit utterances. It is a terrible thing to walk this world, repeating the same phraseology, unless there be added the new life which is alike the soul of the man and the passion that is wedded to his voice. It is this that brings about the charge of cant from the world. We have read of a drama in London which ran for an unprecedented course of time. But eventually it palled upon the public taste; they got tired of hearing the same thing, and the actors themselves were compelled to retire for a while. The task was so monotonous that it threatened to affect their brains. Let us be guarded here. We advocate no new gospel, we do not want Scripture language changed, for it is always fresh, like the dew of the morning. What we contend for is that our experience, our anguish, our rapture, our joy and sorrow, our defeats and our disasters should be thrust into the language and made to do its appointed task while it is fresh and young.

We may anticipate that at no distant date some practical action will be taken in regard to the system of frequent changes. That system was necessitated in other days, but the conditions under which it grew are somewhat changed; and whilst it would be nothing short of a calamity to destroy the connexional element, and reduce the circuits to an exclusive or local spirit, yet the far seeing and progressive Methodist will not recognise danger in a well organised scheme which

would enable the preachers to remain a little longer in their circuits than they do at present. There are rumours to the effect that several of the leading gentlemen of the Legal Hundred would not object to some modification of the existing rule. We can only hope that these rumours are well founded.

It is gratifying to see with what vigour the Methodist Church is pursuing the temperance question. Some people regretted a few years ago that the Wesleyans as a body did not give due attention to this great subject. Probably no such regret exists now, for within the last few years increasing regard has been given to what is unquestionably the most important movement in our time. Few of our readers will disagree with us if we say that the greatest danger to this empire is to be found in the drunkenness by which we are characterised. As a nation this is our reproach. It is unnecessary in these pages to recount the horrors arising from our national vice, to place in array the long roll of statistics bearing upon the liquor traffic, to show how many drunkards die annually, to demonstrate that intemperance is the most fertile source of crime and every kind of wickedness. All that is known to our readers as well as we can tell them. We desire here to recognise with gratitude the fact that there is a growing public opinion on the question, and that the Wesleyan Church has thrown in its lot with others, determined to do what it can to roll back the waves of intemperance that have so long threatened to engulph intellect, morality and genius in a common ruin.

It would be nothing short of a disaster if the Wes-

leyans stood aloof from this crusade, or betokened an indifference to the mighty interests involved. Since the time of Wesley they have been in the front rank of every beneficent movement. Taking up the unfinished work of the Puritans, they, during the last century, swept the face of England as with a great wave of piety, whilst the National Church was sluggish and impotent to save. In foreign missions they are pre-eminent ; in home missions they have turned many a moral waste into a fair and fruitful field : they are alive to all the signal blessings of education : they have resolutely repudiated slavery in every land ; by their enlightened liberality chapels have been built in all our large towns : in all righteous legislation their voice has been heard. Would it not, therefore, be a matter of the deepest sorrow if in what is rapidly coming to be considered the mightiest movement of the nineteenth century, the Wesleyan Church should be found slowly dragging in the rear. We are happy to learn that it is not so. The Church of England took the lead in this matter, but the Methodists have put on their energies, and are likewise going forth to the battle.

In a speech delivered at Newport in April last, Mr. Hughes recognised the eminent services of the Church of England in this matter. The meeting was a most hopeful one, and we were delighted to see the young and energetic secretary on the same platform with Canon Wilberforce, Canon Hawkins, Canon Edwards, and Dr. Valpy French. Mr. Hughes on that occasion ably represented the Wesleyan Church, as he has done on other important occasions. Canon Wilberforce was glad to see the young Methodist preacher there,

and remarked that they met to take counsel together to see how they might best remedy one of the greatest evils known in the land of England. Looking round the room he saw ministers of various denominations, and he thought it was a very great thing that there was at least one subject which would unite the people in one common band—the great subject of temperance. If the temperance work was to proceed, it could only be by every one using their personal influence, by using every advantage which God had given them, by setting examples in the particular line of life in which they were placed. He welcomed most cordially the presence of those who differed from the Church of England on many points, but who yet were willing to work with them, yet he was certain that there would never be any great national meeting on this great curse of England until the Church of Christ faced it in downright earnest. He felt certain that the time was coming, if it had not already come, when the Church of God must set itself more manfully than ever against this evil. The time was coming when, whether they were Liberals or Conservatives—they must make it more clear than ever that there was to be a divorce between the old idea of beer and the Bible. The time was coming when, without any unkindness to the individuals who conducted the liquor trade, by speaking in downright earnest, it must be made clear that the liquor traffic was damning the souls and ruining the bodies of hundreds and thousands of people in this country; and that the Christian members of Christ's Church were no longer content to be overshadowed by this gigantic monopoly, but that

they would lift up their voice manfully, and pray upon their knees earnestly, so that there might be in God's time an end to this evil.

Mr. Hughes reciprocated the sentiments of Canon Wilberforce, and delivered a vigorous speech. He observed that the Church of England had made the great discovery that abstainers and non-abstainers could work harmoniously together. This was really and truly a great discovery, although it seemed very simple afterwards. As a Wesleyan Methodist, he was particularly glad that the Wesleyans followed the example of the Church of England, and he could bear testimony to the practical co-operation of non-abstaining and abstaining brethren in the Wesleyan Committee. It was not found that abstainers became non-abstainers, but non-abstainers frequently advanced a stage, and became abstainers. The success of the movement was now an established fact. Before the Church of England wisely adopted this plan, there were over 700 abstaining clergymen, whereas now there were 4,000 abstaining clergymen. In fact, the Church of England had in this matter taken the wind out of the sails of the Dissenters. The most eminent men of the day in all walks of life were rapidly joining the temperance ranks. Their assistance should be enlisted in the work, for ultimately they must be found on the side of total abstinence. They might all combine in trying to get further restrictions placed upon the liquor traffic, and in demanding Sunday closing for this country, which has been already granted to Scotland and Ireland. They might combine in promoting sanitary reform and the social refinement of the people; for, after all, there was a great

deal of truth in what Charles Kingsley said, that intemperance was a result as well as a cause, and endeavours should be made to give the people better homes, and to develop increased refinements among the people.

It is a matter for gratification that the Methodists have a young man like Mr. Hughes, who can speak on this question with so much distinctive effect. No one can charge him with fanaticism. He has the moderation that wins regard, and sometimes conquers opposition. He speaks with admirable clearness as well as fluency, and his addresses reveal qualities that would entitle him to be chosen as an administrator in connection with such a subject.

There can be no doubt that the temperance cause is rapidly advancing in the Wesleyan community. We have only to run our eye over the committee presented in the minutes of the Conference to see how much progress has been made. It is a very influential body, and their deliberations we feel persuaded will lead to beneficial results. If, as some have asserted, Methodism has been behind other churches in taking up this great question, no such reproach is possible in the future. The Body is now aroused on the subject, and we may expect that its anxiety to see something done to wipe out our national shame will grow more and more.

Those who watch closely the current of events will doubtless perceive a growing anxiety in the Connexion for a higher cultured ministry. Here we enter upon ground that is controversial. A large, and a not unimportant class of men think that the great want of the times is not so much extended education as

extended zeal. Some even appear to think that higher culture brings less spirituality. But no such contention as that can be admitted, otherwise we should get into a difficulty in relation to the character of God. One of the great essentials of the Christian religion is the refinement it gives to the whole round of our faculties. The highest culture appears to the best advantage when it is allied with the Christian spirit. On no ground whatever can we admit the proposition that zeal is the handmaiden of ignorance, which is virtually implied in some of the statements respecting the ministry. We say then that if the Conference can conveniently extend the agencies at work for the training of ministers let them do so, and let the wealthy laymen assist in the work. Perhaps the three years might be extended to four with advantage. Some improvements might also be made in the curriculum. The subjects occupying so much of the attention of the modern mind, and in which so many vast questions are mixed up, would not be unworthy the attention of the students in a greater degree than at present. On this subject perhaps Mr. Dallinger could give wise counsel. He has distinguished himself in science, and has moreover shown that a study of the extended problems presented in our time is not incompatible with zeal in the pulpit. His discourses are powerful utterances, and the visions he has got into the secrets of nature have apparently not dimmed that other eye that looks into the profounder spiritual world and scans the King in his beauty. For after all we must remember that science, with its wondrous revelations, is the far off manifestation of Deity. A gaze into such revelations must not prevent us from

ever seeking to press farther forward to touch the hem of His garment.

The progress of the years will show how far extension of educational agencies is necessary. Meanwhile the Conference is doing its best to prepare a ministry suitable for the times, and it is not improbable that increasing attention will be given to the subject of ministerial culture. In these days every resource ought to be made available for the students. They have to go out as teachers into a world full of life and excitement, a world too with an ampler knowledge than the preceding times possessed. The multiplication of books, the daily newspaper press, the monthly periodical, and the numberless institutions that exist have afforded means of information to the people altogether unknown to our forefathers. In such a time the pulpit must be well equipped if it is to hold its influence.

And now we revert to what we stated in the opening of this chapter, namely, that there are dangers hard by which must be guarded against. These dangers do not arise out of dogma, or church government, or defective educational training. The Wesleyan Church is in no danger of becoming heterodox. It will not part with its cherished doctrines, and the breath of revolutionary passion is not yet felt in the Conference. It is not likely, moreover, to get into any serious difficulties for lack of money to carry on its great aggressive work. The organizations were never more complete. The Methodists have never had so many chapels—never so many agencies at work. All the outward machinery is at command. What then have they to fear?

The view we take is this. The essential danger lies in what we shall call compromise—not compromise with doctrine or theological beliefs—not compromise with Ritualism or Broad Churchmen, or with infidelity and loose thinking in any form, but simply compromise with the world. The old line so sharply drawn between the church and the world by the antecessors is scarcely so visible as it was. And the question recurs, do the young people know the line? Is it brought so clearly before their moral vision as it was? Dr. Rigg in his new work has dealt incisively with this question. He says: "The two great hindrances to our progress are first the growing spirit of worldliness in our congregations arising out of the increasing temptations to gaiety, display, luxury, and frivolity of the present prosperous age, and next the increasing zeal and energy of the parish clergy and their well-drilled assistants."*

For ourselves we are not disposed to lay too much stress upon the second reason, but as regards the first we are wholly at one with Dr. Rigg, and he deserves the gratitude of the church for having called attention in plain straightforward language to the most important subject the Methodists have to consider. It is beyond all others the one question that ought to command the most earnest regard. Their future existence is bound up with it. Eliminate the principle of vital piety, the steadfastness to purity in the church, and what would become of it. The splendid inheritance bequeathed in the shape of a moral energy, unsurpassed in modern days for the pure and holy example that it has set, would wither and die. Happily that time has

* *Connexional Economy, &c.*, p. 203.

not arrived, but those who are on the watch towers must look ahead.

The worldly spirit that is breathing upon the Methodists presents many aspects, but it is unnecessary to go into detail. We note with satisfaction, however, that Dr. Rigg has called attention to one aspect of the subject which it is worth while to consider. "The case of the towns," he says, "especially of the lower and middle classes in the towns, with whom Methodism has most to do, is perhaps the hardest to be met. In many instances wealth has increased far beyond intelligence, ostentatious luxury is unchastened by refinement, social parties imitate the show and profusion of the classes higher placed, without the real culture which refines and graces the luxury of those classes. Hence dinner parties where hospitality borders on excess, and the conversation is barely redeemed from vulgarity, and never aspires to be instructive or truly Christian, or in any way improving. Hence evening parties, where there is no sustained conversation except what may be seasoned with personal gossip, where there is neither religious earnestness nor cultivated intelligence. Such a state of things is most pernicious in the Church. Where the ministers connive at it, much more where they are so feeble or so little spiritual as actively to share and countenance it, it is impossible to expect any spread of godliness among those circles."*

In this passage Dr. Rigg has touched upon a most important question. Those evening parties where there is neither intellectual nor spiritual life, but gaping idleness relieved by the most tawdry talk and

* *Connexional Economy, &c.*, p. 204.

drivel, are the curse of modern society. What man or woman of thought and culture has not sighed to get away from such an atmosphere, to leave the dreary region of gossip retailed from the society journals, and run to some quiet spot of repose where self-communion is possible, or where there is a friend with a brain and a heart with whom thought can be interchanged, and the energies of one's nature can be kept moving with freedom, and without the withering breath of the customs of fashionable life.

Some people seem to forget that there is a world within them. larger, ampler in its range, and infinitely more wonderful than that outer world, which they look at day after day with such meaningless eyes. There is a type of person who is never satisfied unless when strutting about a drawing-room with all the hollow phrases of fashionable life upon the lip. The whole energy of the mind is concentrated at one time on the dress of himself or those around him, and again on some paltry story that has no significance or meaning for himself or any one else. In large parties, we believe, a difficulty is experienced in getting the guests to think or speak with a degree of ease to themselves and mutual comfort, and so dancing is occasionally substituted for intelligent conversation. To use a favourite phrase of Mr. Haweis, dancing is "the broad ground on which all can meet."

We return to our point and note that the age is fond of luxury, pleasure, and amusement, and therefore it is dangerous to the higher life. In the rush of the every day bustle how many people have time for reflection, for the great task of self-communion, self-examination,

without which the spiritual life cannot be matured. Meditation, with its unspeakable blessings, is seldom enjoyed, and instead of the repose and quiet to be felt under the tranquil moonlight falling on library windows, men are out in the city pushing their way through crowded thoroughfares in quest of either business or of pleasure. How many of the men of business, and the men of pleasure of our day, can take up the lines of the greatest of German poets—

> Behind me field and meadow sleeping,
> I leave in deep prophetic night,
> Within whose dread and holy keeping,
> The better soul awakes to light,
> The wild desires no longer win us,
> The deeds of passion cease to chain;
> The love of man revives within us,
> The love of God revives again.*

There can be no doubt that the lack of self-communion is a fruitful source of evil to the Church. It may be permitted to us to say that the multiplication of religious and other meetings is not without some danger. Some people can realise the means of spiritual life only in the outward ordinances of the Church. But to these must be added reflection, and reflection which is possible nowhere except in the secret corner. It is there that principle is nourished, there that it acquires strength for the outward hurricane. The older type of Methodism was essentially meditative. Whilst there was the song on the hillside there was the prayer in the closet. It is a just complaint on the part of some of the preachers whom we have heard lately, that this aspect of Methodism is not

* Bayard Taylor's *Translation*, p. 58.

so strong as it was. The tendencies of the age are against it. If we might be allowed to forecast the years, we would venture to say that it will be necessary for the Methodist ministry to demonstrate with more earnestness the infinite value of self-examination and of reflection, if the Church is to maintain its position as an agent in the preservation of evangelical life.

A great writer hath said that "Meditation is not the dream but the reality of life; not its illusion but its truth; not its weakness but its strength. It is the great storehouse of our spiritual dynamics, where divine energies lie hid for any enterprise, and the hero is strengthened for the field. All great things are born of silence. True, the fury of destructive passion may start up in the hot conflict of life and go forth with tumultuous desolation. But all beneficent and creative power gathers itself in silence ere it issues out in might. Force itself indeed is naturally silent and only makes itself heard if at all when it strikes upon obstructions to bear them away as it returns to equilibrium again. The very hurricane that roars over land and ocean flits noiselessly through spaces where nothing meets it. The blessed sunshine says nothing as it warms the vernal earth, tempts out the tender grass, and decks the field and forest in their glory. Silence came before creation, and the heavens were spread without a word. Christ was born at dead of night, and though there has been no power like His, 'He did not strive or cry, neither was his voice heard in the streets.' Nowhere can you find any beautiful work, any noble design, any durable endeavour that was not matured in long and patient silence ere it

spake out in its accomplishment. There it is that we accumulate the inward power which we distribute and spend in action, put the smallest duty before us in dignified and holy aspects, and reduce the severest hardships beneath the foot of our self-denial. There it is that the soul, enlarging all its dimensions at once, acquires a greater and more vigorous being, and gathers up its collective forces. There alone can we enter into that spirit of self-abandonment, by which we take up the cross of duty, however heavy, and tread the dolorous way with feet however worn and bleeding. And thither shall we return again only into higher and more triumphant power when the labour is over and the victory won, and we are called by death into God's loftiest watch-tower of Contemplation."

It would appear from some recent statements that the class-meeting is likely to receive considerable attention in the future. This question is of immense importance to the Methodist community. It lies at the very basis of Wesleyan life, for it is through the class-meeting that the vital life of Methodism has been mainly developed. When a decrease in membership is announced critics generally turn to that institution, making it the subject of attack. Those acquainted with the history of the Wesleyan Church are aware that it is from the class leader's book that the annual returns are made up. The test of membership is thus admittedly a very strict one.

On this subject a writer in the *Watchman* recently said, "As to the simple but vital question of a numerical decrease, it cannot be too strongly and repeatedly urged that those who are reckoned as

members amongst us are such as regularly meet from week to week—or as opportunity will permit—in classes, *for mutual spiritual communion.* Were another and more relaxed standard of membership admitted our numbers might be multiplied tenfold. But this, and this alone, being the test of union in our body, it cannot but be seen what numerous and various causes will be continually in operation to produce a prejudicial effect."

It is contended by some that the class meeting ought not to be made the test of membership, because there are many religious people to whom it is not agreeable. An eminent divine, for example, recently declared that the class exercises are foreign to the reticent and secretive nature of the Scotch, and he inferred that on this, as well as other grounds, Methodism could not in Scotland be anything but a plant of sickly growth. There are divines in the Wesleyan body who would no doubt take exception to such a remark. An important discussion arose in the Conference some years ago on this question. A Wesleyan minister had advocated the view that it was a mistaken policy to insist on the class meeting as a test of membership. The Conference emphatically protested against such a view, some of the leading men speaking in the strongest language in opposition to a scheme that would aim at placing the class-meeting on a different basis. It is difficult to say how far such opinions as those held by Mr. Hughes prevail at the present moment. No doubt, here and there such views are advocated, but they find no response amongst the older and more influential men. The latter have as yet disclosed no disposition to make the class-meeting

optional. The present much esteemed president of the Conference tells us that "the class-meeting is the inmost institution of Methodism—the germ-cell, to borrow an illustration from vegetable physiology,—out of which the whole tissue and texture of Methodism is perpetually reproduced and developed." Another divine, who had a vast experience of the Wesleyan Church, writes thus: "During a long life of observation, and especially during the forty years in which I myself had the charge of a class, I have invariably seen that in exact proportion as the members are spiritually minded and religiously in earnest, they prize these meetings and delight to attend them; and as they become worldly in their disposition, and formal and lukewarm in the service of God, they are indifferent as to these means of grace, and seek for excuses to justify their non-attendance. No relaxation with respect to this branch of the Wesleyan economy, I trust, will ever be allowed, whatever may be said to the contrary, by men who are given to speculation and change. Surely the experience of more than a hundred years, in which the vast utility of these meetings has been manifest and undeniable, is sufficient to secure for them the stamp of perpetuity. They are equally beneficial to the young disciple and to the aged believer; and are proved to be as well adapted to the reclaimed savages and men eaters of Fiji as to the converted people of civilized England." *

The whole subject is likely to receive increased attention, but no change in so important an institution in the Wesleyan economy can be contemplated without the most serious consideration. Methodism in its

* Jackson's *Recollections*, p. 495.

earlier days never showed a disposition to swell its membership simply to gain the esteem of the world, or to rival other communions. To revolutionise the class-meeting simply for the sake of showing a large membership would be a suicidal policy. The real question at issue is this : Does the class-meeting conduce to the vital energy of Methodism, or would the relinquishing of it as a test of membership lead to a more extended vitality—a more enlarged spiritual life —the wider diffusion of religious force through the congregations?

The Wesleyans have given earnest attention to the question of popular education, now occupying the minds of all enlightened citizens. They are not likely to slacken their energies in this direction if one may judge from some of their meetings lately. Mr. Stopford Brooke, in his brief but incomparable sketch of the history of English literature, remarks that it was the Methodist movement which gave the first impulse to popular education, and stirred men to take interest in the cause of the poor. The leaders in the Wesleyan body have not forgotten this, and knowing how closely education is identified with religion in the life of a nation, they have taken an active part in recent legislative movements. Perhaps no man in this country, with the exception of Mr. Forster, has shown a deeper interest in education than the present president of the Conference, Dr. Rigg. He has written a very comprehensive work on National Education in its social conditions and aspects, which has been of no small service to statesmen engaged in working out the modern educational problem. No man is better fitted to deal with the subject. He has had a wide

experience. Through his youth and his earlier manhood he was a student and teacher. For twenty years he laboured amongst the middle and lower classes in various parts of England. During that time he studied closely social and educational facts. Latterly he has been principal of one of the largest training colleges in the kingdom. He has moreover been a member of the London School Board. With such a leader or counseller the Wesleyans may hope to extend their efforts in the future. Meanwhile, there is much to encourage Methodist enterprise in this matter. In the last Report of the Education Committee to the Conference, we are informed that the District Meetings report favourably of the condition of existing schools. Some cases of weakness and difficulty are mentioned, but these are much outnumbered by reports of increased success and usefulness. The general prosperity is attested by the large increases in the items of income, by the general sufficiency of income to meet expenditure, and, most remarkably, by the increase of 3,068 scholars on the books, and 2,783 in average attendance, notwithstanding the loss of 5,436 scholars from the closing and transfer of schools.

A comparison of the statistical position of Wesleyan day-schools as now reported, with that reported to the Conference of 1870, yields the following results :— Net increase of day-schools during the period intervening between 1870 and 1878, 113, or 15¼ per cent. Increase of day-scholars on the books, 55,417, or 44¾ per cent. Increase of scholars in average attendance, 41,286, or 51½ per cent. Increase of school pence, £38,888, or 81½ per cent. Increase of Government grants, £48,519, or 135 per cent. Increase of sub-

scriptions, &c., £7,890, or 45 per cent. Total increase of income, £95,297, or 94½ per cent. Total increase of expenditure, £95,980, or 95 per cent.*

Dr. Rigg has told us that the position of Methodists at the present time with regard to education is, so far as he can judge, one of great security, and one which deserves their very warm congratulation. Some people thought that when School Boards came in, Wesleyan schools would have to go out: that had not been the case. They believed in the two systems working side by side. So far from School Boards having weakened the position of the Methodists in educational matters, it would appear that they are bestirring themselves for a more extended and improved work. The great subject of middle-class education is engaging the attention of the body. At a meeting in Exeter Hall lately, Mr. Percy W. Bunting said he wished to speak on a question that was not yet part of the educational system of Methodism, but which promised to become so, namely, the education of their middle classes. He held that the Methodist Church had come to a point at which it must face its duty towards this nation. "Whatever might have been their position in the past, struggling upwards through all the grades of persecution and ignorance, of quiet contempt, and at last of public notice, they had come to a point at which the nation not only knew what they were, but was beginning to expect something from them. The Methodist Church must now take its place by the side of the other Churches of this country, and must do its part in all those branches of the national existence which required the intervention of

* *Minutes of Conference*, p. 325.

the Church at all. Between the classes who sent their children to the primary day-schools under government inspection, and those who were able pay £40 or £50 a year to send their children to expensive schools, lay the great bulk of the respectable Methodists of this country, and they had been left by their Church, of necessity, but unfortunately, to provide education as best they could. Their Church had not had leisure to turn its attention to this subject, but recent events had brought the matter before them, and it was for the Connexion to say whether a new departure could not be taken in the matter. The whole number of Methodist children in private schools of all grades—from those which cost £150 a year to those which cost only £30 a year—was not more than 4,500. The great bulk of the Methodist people could not afford to pay more than £30 or £40 a year for the education of each child; and he wished to call the attention of the whole Church to this great gap in their institutions. He claimed for Methodism that it was a full-blown Church, and that it was their duty to ask themselves what they were to do for the Christianising of England, and what Christian England expected of them as one of the greatest representatives of the organised Gospel of Christ. There was this defect in their institutions that needed to be filled up, and he hoped it would be thought over and talked about until they came as a whole Church to take it up with that power of organisation, and of spiritual strength at the back of organisation, which was characteristic of Methodism."*

Undoubtedly this question is of the first importance, and the Connexion, perceiving the force of Mr.

* Speech in Exeter Hall, April, 1879.

Bunting's remarks will probably approach the matter with a view to a practical result. In education, as in other matters, the Wesleyans have demonstrated that they have higher objects than sectarian ends. The policy of the educational leaders in this religious community has been to vindicate freedom, and if they go on with the work of extension the same principles will, no doubt, continue to guide them. The body is under a debt of gratitude to Dr. Rigg for the unwearied part he has played in the varied aspects of the modern educational problem, and for the skill in which he has guided the Methodists in a matter involving at times a little perplexity.

It is gratifying to know that in our age, with many advocates of pure secularism, the Wesleyans have not lost, nor are they likely to lose sight of the increasing value of religious instruction. From a thousand Methodist pulpits warnings are sent forth time after time respecting the danger of the nation sinking into a godless one. Mr. Benjamin Gregory has dealt with this subject firmly. He says there are forces at work in England at the present time which, unless speedily counteracted, will unnerve the sturdy arm, and enfeeble the steady will, and it was in relation to this, as a great national question, that he wished to advocate their Sunday-schools, and the Christian element in their day-schools and the Children's Home. The working classes were the backbone of the country, but they must be penetrated with religion. What was the good of a conscience clause if there was no conscience? They must keep the conscience of the country. Independence was being destroyed by intemperance, and the want of thrift, which was the

result of intemperance. Then there were other great evils in this country—Rationalism and Romanism, disguised or undisguised. What was to be the safe-guard against these evils? asked Mr. Gregory. Religious education; biblical instruction. With respect to the anti-social doctrines which were being disseminated in this country to a larger extent than many people imagined, he thought if they could get the truth into the hearts of the people there would be very few converts to Socialism.

The true policy of Methodism for the future is not to drill its preachers for systematic battle with new speculative theories. It will be well for them to have an intelligent grasp of all current movements of science and philosophy, but they must take care not to expend their energies wholly upon these things. Methodism has been essentially practical from its origin at Oxford. If it is not that it is nothing. The appeal to the religious consciousness is always a power in the hands of the Christian teacher, but it would be clearly a mistake to rest on emotion solely. Methodism has recognised the emotional element in man. It takes into account that part of our nature, and has on the whole met it well. But it has simultaneously guarded the doctrinal basis on which religions rest. It cannot give less heed to the latter in the future if it is to maintain its essentially evangelical mission. "A subjective emotion with no reality to answer to it can scarcely be the religion of a rational and immortal being. The very lights and shadows that come and go over the landscape and leave no trace behind on the earth, they darken into gloom or paint with ten thousand lines of beauty, have a substance, a life, and

a cause. A religious emotion devoid of dogma, but beginning and ending as an emotion, is more unreal even than they. It is absolutely unsubstantial—a thing causeless and self-created, not only without form, but even without a name, indistinguishable by the spectral shadow of death conceived by the genius of Milton—

> If shape it might be call'd that shape had none
> Distinguishable in member, joint or limb,
> Or substance might be call'd that shadow seem'd,
> For each seem'd either.

The very conception of such a religion is a contradiction to the constitution of the human soul."*

But after all, the great danger to evangelical truth—and Methodism, despite its hitherto strong position, must prepare itself to face it—arises from a too restless rationalising spirit. The Church has much to apprehend on this ground, yet it is a hopeful feature, in the midst of portentous clouds, that whilst the age is so immersed in speculative inquiries, the minds of many are drawn towards practical affairs, recognising the impotence of human reason in connection with many problems, and grasping faith with a firmer hand. It is matter for encouragement that some of the best men of the century have adopted this view.

"Arnold did not attempt to penetrate supernatural truth, and saw that, as a child received it so did a man. It was beyond both. He saw the naturalness of faith, how the first impulse of nature was to accept the gospel, and how the intellect of the child rose with the truths which it embraced. He had always

* Garbett's *Bampton Lectures*, p. 68.

deep in his mind an image of believing childhood, and with this association and sentiment was the whole structure of his dogmatic language linked : dogmatic language was so far child's language, that it only put into words what was above our understanding."*

We cannot forbear here quoting a remarkable passage from Mr. Gladstone's able review on *The Courses of Religious Thought.* "We live as men in a labyrinth of problems, and of moral problems, from which there is no escape permitted us. The prevalence of pain and sin, the limitation of free will, approximating sometimes to its virtual extinction, the mysterious laws of its independence, the indeterminateness for most or many men of the discipline of life, the cross purposes that seem at so many points to traverse the dispensations of an Almighty benevolence, can only be encountered by a large and almost immeasurable suspense of judgment. Solution for them we have none. But a scheme came eighteen hundred years ago into the world, which is an earnest and harbinger of salvation ; which has banished from the earth or frightened into darkness many of the foulest monsters that laid waste humanity ; which has restored woman to her place in the natural order ; which has set up the law of right against the rule of force ; which has proclaimed, and in many great particulars, enforced, the canon of mutual love ; which has opened from within sources of strength for poverty and weakness, and put a bit in the mouth, and a bridle on to the neck, of pride. This scheme, by mitigating the present pressure of one and all of these tremendous problems, has entitled itself to be heard,

* Mozley's *University Sermons*, p. 340.

when it boldly assures us that a day will come in which we shall know as we are known, and when their pressure shall no longer baffle the strong intellects and characters among us, nor drive the weaker even to despair. Meantime no man, save by his own wilful fault, is the worse for the advent of Christ, while at least many are the better. Then in shedding upon us the substance of so many gifts, and the earnest of so many more, it has done nothing to aggravate such burdens of the soul as it did not remove. For adventitious forced and artificial theories of particular men, times, and places it cannot be held responsible. Judged by its own authentic and universal documents, I take it to be in its very heart a remedial and alleviating scheme."*

To lay hold of the main idea expressed in this passage will prove of incalculable advantage to the teachers in the pulpit of recent days. It is the great practical side of Christianity that we ought to keep closely in view, and it cannot be doubted that it is this side which the Wesleyans have chiefly cultivated. Let them cling with increasing tenacity to the original purpose of their founder, and they will have still an important mission before them. It must be theirs not to put too much trust in splendid structures, or in accumulation of financial resources, or in complete and systematic organization, valuable as these things are. They must not quiver under the sneer or the derision of those who say they belong simply to a Mission Church. The Church is one vast mission, beginning in Jerusalem, and spreading to the farthest corners of the earth, and the isles of the sea. The mighty forces

* *Gleanings of Past Years*, vol. iii., p. 124.

of the time require that we should bestir ourselves afresh, seek for stronger faith, firmer resolution, and a profounder spirit of self surrender, not searching for satisfaction or applause or rewards here, but remembering that the harvest cometh in the after time. The Thanksgiving Fund ought to give courage and hope. It serves to show that the people still have an interest in the great schemes of the Church, that their sympathies are deep and wide. With congregations and ministers thus allied, the Wesleyans may well look with confidence to a great and constantly expanding future.

A venerable Methodist said on the eve of his death, "The troubles of Methodism have only served to give greater stability to the system, and prepare it for more extensive usefulness in the world. Assailed by many a storm, both from the Church and Dissent, and often betrayed by faithless friends from within, it stands at this day in greater strength and efficiency than at any former period of its existence. Facilities are given to the circuits to memoralize the Conference concerning any rule of the body that is deemed injurious in its operation; but they have nothing to complain of, and are bent upon higher objects than the modification of rules as matter of mere theory and opinion. They are happily intent upon the advancement of true religion by the spread of the gospel in neglected villages, in the crowded populations of large towns, in the army, the navy, and in the heathen world. Never were the societies generally in a state of more profound peace; never was such liberality manifested for the erection of new chapels, and the relief of such as are burdened with debt; all this is more than a

compensation for the clamours of agitators, and the reproaches which were lavished upon the Conference by a licentious press and by licentious tongues. Such are the fruits of fidelity in the hour of trial, the remembrance of the promise, "The Lord shall comfort Zion; He will comfort all her waste places; He will make her wilderness like Eden and her desert like the gardens of the Lord; joy and gladness shall be found therein, thanksgiving and the voice of melody."

There is much encouragement in these words, yet if the venerable man we have just quoted were living today he would be the first to regret the serious decrease in the membership of the current Methodist year. It would have grieved him to read the following announcement in a London newspaper: "The Wesleyan Methodists are, it is said, awaiting with some anxiety the annual district returns, as a decrease of 3,000 in membership is anticipated." It is not posssible for us to say how far this paragraph is accurate, but we have reason to believe, that though the numbers cannot yet be estimated there is likely to be a serious decrease. And we have no desire to conceal the fact. The Methodists are gravely concerned about it already. It is undoubtedly a cloud on the present year of their history. We have no means at present of getting at the causes which led to this decrease. These will no doubt be narrowly sifted at the approaching Conference. Meanwhile we must admit that with increased agencies, with greater educational facilities in the training of the ministry, and other advantages, the matter is a perplexing one. We cannot pronounce too emphatically upon this decrease. But the Methodists themselves will not feel aggrieved if we say that

it will be well to consider this subject with profound earnestness at the earliest possible moment.

The attitude of Methodism in the future towards the various movements working in other Churches is likely to remain as it is. The Methodist regrets the existence of a Broad Church party, a Ritualist party, and he looks with jealous eye upon the glaring attempt made to Romanise England. But he does not conceive that much will be gained by purely intellectual fighting or public debating on these matters. The secret spring of the Catholic revival is not to be found on the housetops, nor on the platform, nor in the pages of newspapers and reviews. It is, rather, in the constant active work on the part of her clergy in streets and lanes apart from the gaze of men. The energy of the Romish Church goes on in a ceaseless course, but is never paraded for public view or public applause. She gathers men and women into the fold, and takes care that they are kept there. It is quite true that she has won in latter days illustrious converts elsewhere than in the broad common walks of life. "There can be little doubt," says Professor Plumptre, "that at least in these latter times, the secret of the fascination which Rome has exercised even on men of widest culture and subtlest intellect, still more on those who are weak and ignorant and unstable, is found in the prevalent scepticism which marks a period of transition. It is not a happy, hardly even a pleasant state to be in for one who is conscious of a craving after truth, who would fain have something to rest on—who yearns, it may be, for a greater measure of assurance than is compatible with the limits of our knowledge. To that appetite—some-

times healthy, sometimes morbid—Rome appeals."* And she appeals to this appetite with success. But this will not explain wholly the tenacious hold she has of her converts. Her unwearied activity—an activity constantly diffused in all her departments of work—is a main source of her power. This energy ought to be imitated and rivalled by the great Dissenting communities in their several spheres of labour. It seems the special function of Methodism to take hold of the masses in the large cities and towns. Its evangelical arm has been already extended there, but it is capable of wider and deeper effort. The prosecution of a mission in the streets and lanes will greatly help to maintain the Protestantism of England.

In its early days Methodism had a fine spirit of self-sacrifice, the true mind of self-surrender. As a Church grows large and wealthy and fashionable it is in danger of getting the sharp edge taken off this spirit, and the modern Wesleyan must see to this with vigilant and anxious eye. Civilisation becomes daily more complex, and the task of cultivating the self-sacrificing spirit gets increasingly difficult. Yet surely the magnificent examples of other days ought not to be forgotten or set aside. When John Wesley on one occasion imagined he was about to die, he left a will stating that he did not leave ten pounds behind him after his debts were paid. His life was from every point of view a life of sacrifice. His coadjutors and successors caught up his spirit and diffused it in English life with marked results. These times require a manifestation of the same spirit. The Methodist forerunners were not much concerned as to where they

* *Movements of Religious Thought*, p. 15.

were sent. The question was not, what kind of place is this, what are its religious statistics, what sums does it send to the various funds, and are there any wealthy people here? They rather said, does the finger of duty point in that direction? And there was a great spiritual meaning involved in that question. Yet when all this is said, justice demands that we shall admit that Methodism in modern life has exemplified the spirit of sacrifice. Its laymen have, as we have already hinted, been marked by conspicuous liberality, and the Thanksgiving Fund which suggested these pages points to a spirit of giving on the part of the ministers. It would be a misfortune for the Church if its teachers were to think too much of comfort and ease, of houses and of lands.

With the exception of the decrease in membership, which is generally contemplated, our cursory review of Methodism in 1879 has been in the main hopeful. The cloud we have referred to need not provoke the discouragement which ends in despair. It will serve a high purpose if it send the preachers to a closer examination of their mode of working, and of their own souls. The Church to which they belong has done great things in the past, and they can look back on memorable associations. The England of to-day has need of Methodism, for it is one of the greatest exponents of evangelical truth.

Whilst appropriating whatever is useful and effective in these days Methodism has no new policy. Its aggressive evangelical character has only to be maintained. It never was a proselytising church. It seeks to leaven the English people with a true religious spirit, and to extend Christianity to the ends

of the earth. That was its aim in the eighteenth century; that is its aim in 1879. As the life of Savonarola was a protest against licentiousness and corruption, so Methodism was and is a protest against national wickedness. One of its most eminent preachers said just before he died, "An opinion has often been expressed within the last few years, that Methodism was necessary a century ago as a means of awakening the Church and nation out of their guilty apathy in respect of religion, but that it has fulfilled its mission, and ought therefore to disappear as a separate agency and merge itself in the Established Church. In these views I confess my inability to concur. There has indeed been a vast increase of true religion in England within the last hundred years; but there has also been a vast increase of population, so that there are now, in all probability, as many ungodly people in the United Kingdom as there were when the Wesleyans and Mr. Whitfield entered upon their irregular labours as itinerant and field preachers. During this period there has been a gratifying increase of enlightened piety and zeal in the Established Church, both among the clergy and laity; but then evils of fearful magnitude have also made their appearance within her pale, and no adequate power to correct and remove them has been hitherto put forth."

It is utterly impossible for Methodism to merge itself in the Established Church, and it is not likely that that question will be seriously discussed again. Each has a work to do which will be better done apart. A wide field lies open to both—an ample range for the exercise of their separate energies. A

union of the two churches would produce a confusion that would be nothing short of a national calamity. Yet though the Methodists pursue their own way they will not fail to sympathise with all evangelical effort on the part of the Established clergy. Those who suppose that the Methodist mind is narrow make a mistake, for it watches all the excellences developed in neighbouring communions, and is ever ready to seek out the good. Though not sympathising with the aim of the Broad Church party it willingly recognises the conspicuously fine qualities revealed in the mental and spiritual characters of some of its apostles. The large heart of Dean Stanley, the fine religious emotion and tender thought of Stopford Brooke, and the deep passionate earnestness of Frederick Robertson, as well as the subtle thinking of Maurice, and the bold warmth and rich naturalness of Charles Kingsley —all these have attractions for the Methodist. Such men in their turn have looked into the virtues of the Wesleyan system, and only lately an eminent English Churchman, referring to the Puritans and their successors, said, "We cannot study the bearing of the great Puritan party, to which we may look as the parent of all latter forms of Dissent, without seeing that there were in it many elements of nobleness. Its very name—in itself a far grander name than Protestant—bore its witness, though given it might be in derision of a high ideal purity in doctrine, in worship, and in morals. The men who were so described were marked by an intensity of faith which has seldom been seen working on so large a scale since the first ages of the Church. Sin and holiness, and pardon and peace, and heaven and hell were to

them intense realities. They were as the salt of the nation, preserving it from the putrescence with which it was threatened by the revived paganism and sensualism of the Renaissance." The same writer justly points out, however, that the earlier Puritans acted sometimes in the spirit of Sectarianism, and used their hour of triumph without pity. Happily, better days have come, and each sect is disclosing a willingness to recognise the excellences of the other. Methodism in modern life has been Puritanism on its best side, and without its narrowness or its intolerance.

THE END.

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